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The Shape of Things

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THE NATION WAITED IN VAIN FOR THE Supreme Court to decide on the Wagner Labor Relations Act last Monday, but the justices are either playing a waiting game or—what is more likely—are still very busy exchanging majority, concurring, and dissenting opinions on what is bound to prove a historic set of cases. Meanwhile Justice McReynolds once more made an impromptu speech in court, as he once did on the occasion of the Gold Clause cases. In it he struck out again at Justice Stone with a degree of bitterness which shows that all is far from serene among the members of the court.

*

NEVER HAS A PROGRESSIVE BLOC IN CONGRESS been needed more than today when the reactionaries are trying to force through repressive trade-union measures. Congress means well. What it needs is a group with courage and realism to take the lead in pointing out the dangers of such legislation.

*

THE PROSPECT OF JEFFERSON CAFFERY BEING named as Ambassador to Brazil is an alarming one. Caffery has a far from enviable record. As Minister to Colombia he was involved in the Barco oil concession. As chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs in the State Department he played an important role in the overturn of Machado and the establishment of the Batista dictatorship in Cuba. As Ambassador to Cuba he has thrown his full support to Batista as against the democratic government. His appointment to Brazil would be particularly unfortunate in view of the fact that the long-delayed trials of Luiz Carlos Prestes and Arthur Ewart have now been begun. Judging by the summary treatment meted out to David Levinson when he visited Brazil for the purpose of acting as counsel for Prestes and Ewart there is no possibility that these men will obtain justice unless the American and other foreign ambassadors impress upon the Brazilian government that along with Prestes and the others it is itself on trial before the bar of world opinion. Levinson, an able American lawyer, was not allowed even to see the prisoners. He was subjected to an almost incredible campaign of slander and misrepresentation by the Brazilian press, hounded by the police, and finally ordered to leave the country. In such a situation America needs as its representative someone more liberal than Caffery.

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WE HOPE THE HOUSE WILL MOVE SWIFTLY IN its investigation of Nazi activities in America. The Dickstein resolution calling for an inquiry has passed the Rules Committee, and there can be little doubt that it will pass the House itself. As we pointed out several weeks ago in our editorial No Brownshirt Armies, the existence of a uniformed force of several hundred thousand men, all under drill and all owing allegiance to Hitler, cannot be tolerated by a democracy. Such a state within a state has in every instance in European history been followed by the whittling away of state power and the disintegration of democracy. Our only hope is that the committee of inquiry will have at its disposal investigators with the clarity, courage, and resourcefulness that the La Follette committee and its staff have shown.

*

NEWS OF CONTINUED LOYALIST VICTORIES in Spain has heartened American progressives throughout the nation. The military strategy of the Loyalist command seems at once brilliant and daring. Basic to it has been the air force, which has cut a wide swathe along the entire battle-front and given the government forces an almost unchallenged command of the air. But one must be wary in rejoicing. The war will be bitter and protracted. At present writing the Loyalists are moving on Cordoba but the rebels are closing in on Bilbao. Both are likely to hold out for some time. The business of capturing a Spanish town is a difficult one. The most serious factor in Bilbao is that the city is crowded with refugees that have poured in from surrounding territory, and there is a real food shortage. The deciding factors in any event are not the number of cities captured. They are the air force, the munitions supply, the morale, and the degree of foreign intervention. As for morale, it is now clear from the mutinies among Franco's men and the widespread disaffection of the workers and peasants in the territory he occupies, that his strength is on the point of crumbling. As for intervention Mussolini does not yet seem to have moved from his crisis of indecision. And the evidence piles up that Germany is none too anxious to throw its strength into a Spanish war.

*

IN THIS ISSUE WILL BE FOUND AN OPEN letter to the editors from Maurice Wertheim. We are glad to publish it as we were glad, a few weeks ago, to print Mr. Villard's article on the same subject. In both cases it seems to us that our readers are best served by the airing of such differences among the close associates of *The Nation*. Mr. Wertheim's article is a forceful statement of the position of the liberals who do not regard the institution of judicial review as an unmixed blessing, but who feel that the dangers embodied in the President's proposal represent too high a price to pay for the reforms intended. We respect this attitude and the sincerity with which it is urged. We shall continue, as in the past, to give serious consideration to such objections in the more precise formulation of our editorial position on the President's proposal.

APRIL 6 IS THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY of America's entrance into the World War. Twenty years afterward we are still suffering from the dislocations and the hysterias that the war brought on. The striking thing about the anniversary, however, is that it has been made the occasion for persistent rumors that the President would make some dramatic gesture toward world peace on that day. The rumors have at the present writing not materialized. And yet there can be no doubt that Mr. Roosevelt does feel that an international conference, to discuss not only disarmament but more basic problems as well, would contribute to world peace. If he waits, it is because the example of Wilson has shown that this is a very delicate matter and may result in the impairment of American prestige. The French are obviously panting for such a conference, and there can be no doubt that the smaller democracies of Europe would welcome it. Our own feeling is still what it was last summer, when the idea was first broached. World peace is advanced relatively little by conferences. What we need to do is not to strive for new peace machinery but to throw the full energy of America behind the existing machinery. The immediate alternatives to a conference seem however even worse. If the reports are to be credited that the President may seek to frighten Europe by launching a huge naval building program, and thus obtain disarmament concessions, it would be a grotesque way of approaching his objective.

*

IT HAS BEEN CLEAR FOR SOME TIME THAT General William P. Carney has been conducting an offensive of his own in the New York *Times* sector of the Spanish civil war. General Carney was stationed in Madrid until the stubbornness of his beloved Madrilenos in resisting Franco began to prey on his mind. He is now in rebel territory, but still waging his private war. More important—because more subtle—distortions of the Spanish news may be found in the recent reports of mutinies. On March 29 Frederick T. Birchall sent a long and authenticated dispatch from London to the New York *Times*, reporting mutiny among the rebel troops. The next day, as if in response to a query, "What? No discontent in Loyalist territory?" he sent another dispatch adding reports of unrest among government forces, especially the Asturian miners. This was a slight item and unsupported, yet the headline, magnificently "impartial," read "Mutinies Affect Both Sides." On April 1, P. J. Philip from Paris joined the fray by allowing (without revealing his evidence) that "there is just as little contentment [in the insurgent ranks] as among the Republicans." Actually the Asturian miners have since been reported as giving Franco considerable trouble, but the impression of the *Times* headline remains with its readers. Add to this the fact that when the Catholic Basque government protested to the Vatican against the assassination of priests by the insurgents, the news was carried both by the Associated Press and United Press services, but it never appeared in the *Times*. Could the reasons be the same as those which operate to exclude

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the reporting of the speeches of Malraux in this country, while those of Hilaire Belloc and other Franco supporters are given ample space? Could they be the same reasons as those which have kept American papers in general from reporting the exciting story of socialist economic transformation in Catalonia and Spain? The *Times* is not only a private enterprise; it is a social institution. It owes an explanation to the American public.

✶

ON MARCH 31 A DISPATCH FROM BOSTON TO the New York *Times* briefly announced that "the Legislature completed action today on the bill repealing the Teachers' Oath Law, and it is indicated that the Governor will sign it tomorrow." But the next day was April Fool's Day. A dispatch dated April 1 read, "A veto by Governor Charles F. Hurley today killed two years' efforts to wipe from the statute book a law requiring teachers to swear that they will support federal and state constitutions. The House sustained the veto . . ." Governor Hurley is a member of the American Legion and a Catholic. In a ponderous decision explaining his veto he announced that repeal would "encourage" certain "vicious minorities." These minorities include, we must assume, President Conant of Harvard, President Neilson of Smith, President Compton of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and other academic dignitaries who publicly opposed the oath as an invasion of freedom. We hope that these subversive elements will not accept permanent discouragement. They and all Massachusetts liberals should adopt the slogan devised by one of our more irresponsible editors—"Let the Hurley worm get the bird!"

✶

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE JAPANESE DIET has thrown the entire Far Eastern situation once more into confusion. In recent weeks there had been unmistakable signs of moderation in Japanese policy toward China. Nothing more was said about the desire for a five-province independent state in North China; the troops that attacked Suiyuan last November were withdrawn into Chahar and Manchuria; military pressure was apparently being abandoned for the slower and somewhat less objectionable methods of cultural and economic penetration. The calling of a new election represents an unexpected and important victory for the more extreme military elements. Reports from Japan indicate that the fascist group may actively enter the campaign for the first time with a party of its own, but the chances are that it will do so only if assured of victory. Otherwise, the government will probably wait until after the election and rely on the inducements of office to enable it to form a pro-military political party from among the elected deputies. In either event, the election is expected to discredit the civilian opposition—which is alleged to lack "seriousness" in the face of the national crisis. This will place the military more firmly in power than ever and reduce the chances for a peaceful settlement of either domestic or international issues.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLIC ACTIONS OF the Socialist Party at its special convention in Chicago were its indorsement of the Committee for Industrial Organization, its statement of the party attitude toward war, and its indorsement of a Farmer-Labor Party. The first represented a decision that was difficult even as it was inevitable and desirable. Just as certain sections of the American Federation of Labor found it hard to transfer their allegiance to the more progressive C. I. O. at the cost of breaking with the A. F. of L., so the Socialist Party could not sever its allegiance to the A. F. of L. without a struggle in certain quarters. On the war issue, the stand of the party reflected the difficulties which the existence of a socialist state has strewn in the ideological path of socialist groups in capitalist countries, but maintained its traditional position. "The Socialist Party calls upon the working class to come to the support of the Soviet Union. This can be done only by refusing support to any war of any capitalist country . . . by uninterrupted class struggle to overthrow the rule of capitalists."

✶

MR. ROOSEVELT CAUSED A FLURRY IN WALL Street by his press statement that commodity prices were too high. We print in this issue an article by Eliot Janeway which documents the President's statement. Although rising prices normally act as a stimulant of production and employment, they carry with them fundamental maladjustments. Profits skyrocket more rapidly than prices, and prices rise more rapidly than wages. Salaried employees and others living on a fixed income find their buying power drastically reduced by the advance in the cost of living. The result is that production, spurred by the exceptional profits, tends sooner or later to expand more rapidly than the market, which is dependent on consumer buying power. In theory the decline in the buying power of wage-earners and salaried employees is more than offset by the increased prosperity of shareholders and business men. But it happens that these groups, being on a somewhat higher income level, tend to save a large proportion of their new-found income, thus adding to the congestion of the capital market at a time when the demand for new investment is beginning to be checked by low consumer buying power. While it is doubtful whether the upward surge has reached its peak, the rapid increase in prices—particularly in the large monopoly industries—must be viewed with great concern.

✶

OUR READERS MAY BE AMUSED BY A GLIMPSE into the problems of an editor's life as they are revealed by a letter just received from a certain Professor A who had been asked if he would review a book by a Mr. B. He writes: "I shall be happy to review Mr. B's book, if you do not wish it done before July. Meanwhile I should like to inquire why my book, 'The This Versus the That,' has not been reviewed in your columns." The cream of the jest is that Mr. B. agreed to review the book in question some four months ago and has, we suppose, been sleeping with it under his pillow.

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Governor Earle in Flames

Dear Sirs: I have read with interest your editorial "Spain in Flames." I concurred in the finding of the Pennsylvania Censorship Board because "Spain in Flames" was too strong a reminder to me of the propaganda of the European causes preceding our entry into the World War. How many thousands of our best American lives were lost as a result of this propaganda?

One of the subtitles of this picture was "Spain Needs Men of Military Experience to Officer its Armies." Is that not a direct invitation to our World War veterans, our men who have served in the navy, army, and National Guard, and our graduates of military schools to enlist in the Spanish Loyalist army?

The Nation has undoubtedly done a magnificent job in its philippics against the danger of fascism in this country. But so far as human liberty is concerned, just what is the difference between fascism and communism? Both are reigns of terror. The hand of the secret police may fall upon the shoulder of any man, woman, or child in a Fascist or Communist country, and they will disappear never to be heard of again. Both fascism and communism have absolute suppression of freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Both Fascist Germany and Communist Russia have religious persecution.

That the army of General Franco is an army of Fascist mercenaries, there is no question. What about the Spanish Loyalists, made up in large part of Syndicalists, Communists, and Anarchists? Is *The Nation* so naive as to believe that the Spanish government would be receiving the 100 per cent backing of the Soviet government unless the Soviets were convinced Spain would be Communist in the event of victory for the government forces?

Take a trip to Pennsylvania and learn how the liberal Democratic administration there is giving fair play, for the first time, to the worker in Pennsylvania. Then compare this condition with what is happening to the worker in Fascist Germany and Communist Russia.

Once before *The Nation* criticized me because I said it was a fortunate thing for Austria that Dollfuss put down the Socialists' rebellion. Had the Socialists won, the entire country outside Vienna would have gone over to Hitler, and within six weeks Austria, including Vienna, would have been under the blighting curse of Nazism.

If the barring of recruiting propaganda of any alien cause from Pennsylvania, with the resultant prevention of the sacrifice of adventurous and courageous American youth on European battlefields, incurs the ire of *The Nation,* frankly I welcome it, provided *The Nation* will state fairly just what the issue is between us. GEORGE H. EARLE

Harrisburg, March 26

GOVERNOR EARLE'S letter deserves a careful answer, " 'Spain in Flames,' " he says, "is too strong a reminder of pre-war propaganda." "How many thousands of our best American lives," he asks, "were lost as a result of this propaganda?" That is a platform question which might rouse a multitude; in the relative quiet of an editorial column it provokes a counter-question. Does Governor Earle really believe that it was motion pictures of the horrors of war, and similar material, that led us into the World War? If he does he has not read the reports of the Senate munitions investigation, conducted by another Pennsylvanian, Stephen Raushenbush. Those reports proved what many suspected—that the most effective propaganda leading us toward war was "not a motion picture" but Wall Street loans to the Allies and large orders for Pennsylvania steel—items not commonly under state boards of censors.

"Spain in Flames" is not an official production of the Spanish government. One subtitle does not make a recruiting station, and this one, in its content, was not a call to arms. But granting that it might be so construed, the possibility that American legionnaires and national guardsmen might rush to enlist in the Loyalist army seems to us less threatening to American democracy than a *summary act of censorship in Pennsylvania.*

We retreat to our corner long enough to thank Governor Earle for his kind words about *The Nation* and to compliment him on his fine work in opening up the steel towns of Pennsylvania to their inhabitants.

We believe that Soviet Russia's primary purpose in supporting the Spanish government is to prevent fascism, not to establish a communist regime. We further believe that there is a vast difference between fascism and communism—a difference, say, as vast as that between night and day. But if there *were* no difference between fascism and communism, Governor Earle's act of censorship would be all the more inexcusable and dangerous.

Granting all of the Governor's premises, his logic runs as follows: The Spanish government is communistic; communism and fascism are the same since both impose —to quote Governor Earle—"absolute suppression of freedom of the press and freedom of speech"; the way not to support communism in Pennsylvania is to introduce suppression there! If it were not so serious, we should propose this sequence as a scenario for a moving picture to be entitled, "Governor Earle in Flames."

Government Bond Slump

BEFORE the recent announcement that the Federal Reserve banks would resume buying of government securities, long- and medium-term government bonds had declined from four to eight points in the past four months, one of the severest drops in recent years. Ordinarily a sharp recession in federal securities is an occasion for anxiety. If on this occasion the decline has caused only mild apprehension, the reason is that bond prices have not been really low. Four per cent issues have not sold below 109, and 3 per cent bonds still command a premium. But so great a decline cannot fail to cause repercussions in our national economy.

Most observers attribute the drop chiefly to the new reserve requirements imposed by the Federal Reserve Board. A few banks have been forced to sell securities in order to obtain funds to meet the reserve requirements. The appearance of this selling has led speculators to sell in the hope of buying back later at a lower price and thus realizing substantial profits. It is evident, however, that the bank selling would have been slight if

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there had not been favorable prospects for the investment of the money withdrawn from governments: it was generally believed that we had reached the end of the period of "easy money," and with the demand for investments in private enterprise increasing, interest rates were tending to rise slightly.

The dangers inherent in a rise of interest rates have been pointed out recently by a number of economists, including J. M. Keynes. Basically, such a rise means that capital exacts a heavier toll from the process of production, leaving a smaller share for labor. High interest rates serve to increase the gap between consumer buying power and the total output of industry, thus hastening the next depression. They also serve as a brake on the normal expansion of industry at a period when brakes should be used, if at all, with careful discrimination. It is doubtful, however, whether the Federal Reserve Board is justified in open-market purchases at this time. The primary danger remains that of inflation, and the recovery period is the best time for the Reserve banks to dispose of their heavy holdings of government obligations.

A further decline in bonds, however, would undoubtedly have a serious effect on the federal budget. A rise of ½ of 1 per cent in the interest rate on federal securities will ultimately cost the federal government $170,000,000 annually. While this may not seem a large sum in relation to the budget as a whole, it makes increased taxation at this session of Congress all the more necessary if the budget is to be balanced in time to head off an inflationary boom. Failure on the part of Congress to take such action may create apprehension which will result in a further decline in securities.

Assuming that new taxes are levied and that inflation can be checked—the increase in member-bank required reserves is a step in that direction—the chances are that bond prices would have recovered without special governmental action. No large government loans are likely to be floated within the next year. Under the Social Security Act several hundred million dollars are to be accumulated annually as reserves for the old-age and unemployment-insurance funds. This money must be invested in government securities.

The chief dangers in the present situation are political rather than economic. Already there are indications that the decline in bonds will be taken as a pretext for a new drive to balance the budget, not by increased taxation, but by drastic economies at the expense of the country's underprivileged groups. Chairman Doughton of the House Ways and Means Committee was yielding, consciously or unconsciously, to this pressure when he declared against new taxes and in favor of "economies." As the Brookings Institution recently pointed out, the only economies within the realm of practical politics are reductions in the outlay for relief and emergency purposes. The question of who pays the cost of a balanced budget is a straight political issue. It may be borne by the unemployed, the drought-stricken farmers, and government employees or by the high-income groups. Economic as well as humanitarian considerations support the demand that the latter group assume the burden.

The Tables Turned

THE recent discussions about the legality of the sitdown strike and the Wagner Act have served to make clear the curious paradox of the use of the federal power in a democracy such as ours. The industrialists have recently contended that the federal power does not extend to any business activity that is not in the clearest physical sense part of interstate commerce. They went so far as to have their Liberty League lawyers' committee draw up advisory opinions informing employers that the Wagner Labor Act was unconstitutional, along with a good deal of the rest of the New Deal program. The progressives, on the other hand, have contended that the federal power must be extended to industry to save the country from chaos.

That was yesterday. Today the growth of the C. I. O. organizing campaign has changed all that. It is now the employers who come storming into Congress, begging for the extension of the federal power to manufacturing enterprise so as to make the sitdown illegal and bring government intervention into labor disputes. And it is now the progressives and the labor forces who look askance at the use of the federal power, and fear what the government may do. Thus stands the paradox: the industrialists and conservatives, whose general position is against the federal power, now want government intervention in labor disputes; and the progressive and labor forces, whose general position is in favor of the federal power, now oppose its extension to labor.

The moral is clear. In approaching public affairs we must be wary of the dogmas that any groups set up. Any dogma, when pushed to its absolute limits, involves its holder in logical difficulties. That is what has happened now to capital and labor. Each has turned the tables on the other. And each has borrowed the other's dogma.

The real thing to be kept in mind is not the dogma, whether of federal power or of states' rights, but the social interests that it serves and the limits that must be imposed on it in serving those interests. Paul Ward's article in this issue on the incorporation of trade unions seems to us to express the sound view on that subject—a subject which is likely soon to become as heated a topic of discussion as the sitdown has been. It is not that we doubt the *legality* of the extension of federal power to industrial disputes. But, given the legality, we do doubt the *desirability* of the use of the federal power for this particular purpose.

Our reasons are simple. Given the balance of social forces today, government must use its power only to establish the conditions within which collective bargaining can be carried on. The rest must be left to the deliberations of workers and employers, tempered by public opinion. For government now to go beyond establishing collective bargaining would be to move in the direction of outlawing or crippling strikes. And to do this would be to paralyze at the outset the process by which labor can build its strength to the point where it stands a chance of balancing the strength of the corporations.

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WASHINGTON WEEKLY

BY PAUL W. WARD

Should Unions Be Incorporated?

Washington, April 4

ORGANIZED labor's enemies have just begun to fight. Legislative shackles for the new labor movement are being forged in dozens of law shops and legislatures throughout the land. The drive is toward wholesale enactment of state laws paralleling the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act that Great Britain put on its statute books the year after the general strike of 1926. Equipped and directed by the National Association of Manufacturers, the United States Chamber of Commerce, and related state and local councils of industrialists, the drive is being furthered either through outright knavery or a fantastic sort of punditical ignorance by an army of writers and lecturers including George Sokolsky, Dorothy Thompson, Leo Wolman, Walter Lippmann, David Lawrence, and Mark Sullivan. These and other witting or unwitting publicists of reaction are rallying the battalions of the bourgeois with day-by-day tracts and speeches pampering the anti-union prejudices of the middle class. Not content with suggesting that labor leaders draw enormous salaries, squander union funds, charge their followers exorbitant dues, and indulge in various forms of racketeering, they seek to impress upon an easily gulled public an idea that existing labor legislation grants unions vast rights, privileges, and power without imposing reciprocal safeguards, responsibilities, and duties. All of which is merely the groundwork for an attempt to block the wage-earner's rise by (1) limiting picketing, strikes, and boycotts, (2) imposing compulsory arbitration and the outright prohibition of strikes, and (3) requiring unions to incorporate on the same basis as profit-making corporations—which would lay them open to innumerable forms of debilitating court attacks.

Nearly all these types of attack on labor unions are embodied in measures now pending in Congress or the state legislatures. Representative Dies's bill is a case in point. Another is the anti-sitdown amendment to the Guffey coal bill which Senator Byrnes of South Carolina introduced a few days ago. Byrnes, who posed as the workingman's friend when he had to stand for reelection last year and gave the pose verisimilitude by sponsoring a bill to prohibit shipping of strike-breakers across state lines, was motivated in the present instance by the terror of the mill men among his constituents lest the sitdown technique give unionism a real hold in the South at last.

The most dangerous form of legislative attack is that which aims at forcing unions to incorporate or otherwise submit to regulation. It is the most dangerous because it can be made to seem so sweetly reasonable. Its proponents can even point out that the great Justice Brandeis when he was in active practice as a friend of labor spoke out in behalf of union-incorporation laws. They will not go on to say that unions then were seeking legal standing and that their fight for the right to incorporate was successfully opposed by the employers. They will prefer simply to elaborate Brandeis's argument that incorporation would make labor unions less "reckless and lawless." All the pat arguments now being trotted out in favor of union incorporation or regulation are based on a premise that unions are irresponsible agencies. It is certainly not a premise to which employers would subscribe who have had long contractual relationships with unions. The records are full of contrary testimonials from management in the railroad, printing, and garment industries, to mention only a few. It is pertinent to point out in this connection that the National Railroad Adjustment Board has trouble not with the unions but with the roads.

Another apparently persuasive point in the argument for union incorporation is that under existing circumstances employers have no redress against unions in that they cannot sue them for damages as they easily could do if unions were obliged to incorporate. This argument is disingenuous. The United States Supreme Court in a unanimous decision handed down in 1922 in the Coronado coal cases involving the United Mine Workers (which the C. I. O.'s chieftain, John L. Lewis, even then headed) ruled that unions are suable in the federal courts both for injunctions and money damages, and in the Coronado cases damages of $27,500 actually were paid. What is true in federal law also is true in state law. In many states unions are suable for damages under codes relating to voluntary unincorporated associations. But the records of the federal and state courts show very few instances in which employers have felt they had any grounds for suing unions for damages. They have preferred to sue out injunctions, taking advantage of the notorious liberality of the judiciary where anti-union injunctions are sought, and their preference is easily understood. In the case of a damage suit, the employer must be able to prove his case or foot the bill. But in injunction cases he is not obliged to prove anything.

Now that labor is meeting with increasing success in limiting the use of injunctions in labor disputes—through the Norris-LaGuardia Act applying to federal courts and a growing number of complementary state laws—employers are eager to find new excuses for tangling the labor movement up in what is merrily called the judicial process. Laws requiring unions to incorporate would serve that purpose.

Of course, "responsibility" and "suability" are not the only reasons adduced in support of the union-incorporation campaign. There are oilier ones. It is suggested that

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public regulation will prevent despotic leadership, keep dues low, eliminate racketeering, and abolish misuse of union funds, and the suggestion is made in such a way as to imply that conditions with respect to all these matters are notoriously evil in the labor movement. This overlooks the fact that practically all unions have a democratic form of government and constitutions that are easily amended. Then, too, most unions have relatively low dues, especially those in the mass-production industries and the industrial unions. Furthermore, most unions require a strict periodic accounting of union funds, and a substantial number impose a uniform bookkeeping system on their locals. Cases of misuse of union funds exist, of course, but they are so rare that American industrialists should blush to mention them, considering their own record as trustees of other people's money.

The most "reasonable" aspect of the argument for union incorporation is the suggestion that since business organizations incorporate it is no more than fair to require that unions follow suit, and that this would subject both to the same legislative treatment. Its reasonableness breaks down on close analysis. It is a concept which places business corporations, organized for profit, on the same footing as unions founded by propertyless workers to protect and promote the social and economic welfare of their families. There are many other points of difference that might be enumerated. It will suffice to point out that governments traditionally recognize a distinction between profit-making and non-profit associations and make special provision for them in the incorporation and tax laws. But much more to the point of all this is the fact that, whereas employers want to make incorporation of unions compulsory, there is no compulsion upon employers to incorporate. They are free to operate either as individuals, as copartnerships, or as voluntary associations. Thus, to force unions to incorporate would not place them on a parity with employers but would deprive them of the freedom of selection open to employers.

"The Nation" and the Court

AN OPEN LETTER FROM MAURICE WERTHEIM

To the Editors of *The Nation:*

Those who control the Foundation which owns *The Nation* believe in the principle of editorial freedom. To insure it further they have, as you know, turned over to you, for a period, complete control of the paper in legal form. Because of my association with the Foundation and the fact that those who control it have no part in shaping *The Nation's* policies I feel that I must record my own personal dissent from your editorial policy on the President's Supreme Court program.

I do this in a spirit similar to that evidenced by my esteemed associate, Mr. Oswald Garrison Villard, in his recent article What Is *The Nation* Coming to? in the issue of March 27, wherein he discussed the same subject. I agree with him that the policy of the paper on this issue has been a mistaken one. Since *The Nation* was one of the first advocates, even before the President raised the issue, of a constitutional amendment to curb usurpation of power by the Supreme Court, it has, I believe, lost a great opportunity in not realizing that advocacy of the President's proposal betrays its own cause.

The issue seems perfectly clear. Many times *The Nation* had eloquently stressed the dangers inherent in a continuation of the practice by which the Supreme Court was in effect becoming a legislative body. This took courage and penetrating analysis. *The Nation* was one of the lone voices crying in the wilderness long before the President's plan had so consolidated opposition opinion as to make it appear that the whole country would now welcome a definite curb on the powers of the court. But for that very reason it is difficult for me to understand how *The Nation* can, editorially and otherwise, now support the President's plan, since it is obvious that the plan in no way corrects the fundamental evil. Adding new members to the court actually sets the stamp of government approval upon a continuation of the legislative function by interpretation—only in the opposite direction. That is as plain as a pikestaff. It is equally apparent that the plan does not even pretend to touch the evil of close decisions. And to favor the President's proposal as well as a constitutional amendment completely begs the question, for I do not believe it can be convincingly urged that if the President gets his way he would do the necessary crusading and campaigning for a constitutional amendment. Since he has declared himself against it as a corrective of the situation, it is now clear that the present issue lies between one and the other.

Why does *The Nation* favor the President's proposal? Apparently it believes that through this expedient there can be quickly enacted progressive statutes which will be free from the danger of Supreme Court veto. In the few days intervening between the President's proposal and its next issue, *The Nation* apparently decided that the possibility of attaining such legislation was of greater value than the reform that it itself had advocated; of greater value even than the price which a democracy was called upon to pay.

I am forced to the conclusion that this represented an unreflective stand. That the Constitution should be amended in order to narrow the interpretative power of the court on laws passed by the people's representatives is now being generally accepted. That we need more progressive legislation is likewise generally conceded. But why should *The Nation*—which has so resolutely op-

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posed everything which even smacked of the authoritarian idea—allow itself to be caught by the bait of a few immediate laws which, as its own Washington correspondent, Mr. Paul Ward, pointed out in a recent issue, may not prove to be so progressive after all? Should not *The Nation* explore more deliberately the dangers inherent in this situation and call to the attention of its readers all its implications?

It amounts to this—that for the promise of immediate progressive legislation we are asked to sacrifice the great democratic principle that fundamental changes in our system of government shall result only from the decision of the people. Is it not clear beyond question, and does *The Nation* not know that it is clear beyond question, that the people have not passed on this subject and have not given the present Administration, as has been claimed, a mandate to do what the President now proposes? Obviously, before the last election he had either not developed his plan or had carefully concealed it from the electorate. Even *The Nation* must agree that the President was very ill advised when he tried in his recent "fireside chat" to reconcile his court proposal with that plank of his Presidential platform which reads, "If these problems cannot effectively be solved within the Constitution we shall seek such clarifying amendments as will assure the power to enact those laws adequate to regulate commerce, protect public health and safety, and safeguard economic security." Either this plank is so phrased as to be utterly misleading and deceptive, which I am loath to believe, or the present plan is not one of those solutions which it was anticipated to work out "within the Constitution." Patently it is not. It is a clear, bald attempt to grasp power—a thing not in the least to be condoned because it may be, and I believe it was, well intentioned—that is, with the purpose of securing progressive legislation sooner than would be possible via the democratic route.

Has *The Nation* called attention to and weighed the fact that since 1800 the average time taken to secure ratification of constitutional amendments by three-quarters of the states has been sixteen months, and that in the case of the last four amendments the average time required has been less than one year? It seems to me infinitely more important to ponder these facts than to refer, as some defenders of the President's plan have done, to the length of time which the proposed child-labor amendment has been before the country, since it is common knowledge that there is bitter opposition to it on the part of a very large section of the public, progressive and reactionary alike. It may have been true that the same difference of opinion existed in regard to a constitutional amendment on the question of the court before the launching of the President's plan, but it is so no longer. The one merit of this move has been to make the necessity of some action crystal clear to almost all, and it seems a fair statement to say that if the President were now to use the weight of his great office to unite all factions on this question, we could secure a satisfactory constitutional amendment in a period of even less than the average time it took to ratify the last four. Of course, anything is debatable, but the weight of evidence surely inclines to this view and indicates that we might, therefore, within a relatively short time secure the desired legislation without a sacrifice of democratic principles. Does it not appear that the entire background of *The Nation* during the seventy-two years that it has fought valiantly for the principles of democracy should lead it to favor such a course and to abandon its partisan stand on a question which should never have been partisan? Should not *The Nation* decisively and promptly call a halt to the shameless horse-trading into which this great question has degenerated?

A halt must be called. The people of this country want their courts to be respected. It is unthinkable that a progressive and liberal journal should actually advocate any plan by which new judges are placed on our supreme tribunal who will decide cases on instructions, or who will be believed to have decided them on this basis. To favor this plan because it is legal is but a poor excuse; in fact, it is no excuse at all, because if the plan is once put into effect, I am bound to think that in the future there will be very little difference between what is "legal" and what is "illegal," since Presidents hereafter will have the precedent of 1937 to enable them to make what is illegal, legal. A liberal editor recently told me that if the President ran for a third term, he would shoulder a musket and fight. I cannot understand why liberal editors do not see in the President's proposal a far more dangerous precedent, unless in all their discussion of the Constitution they have temporarily forgotten one of the underlying reasons behind the Declaration of Independence. "The history of the present King of Great Britain," says that document, "is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations . . . he has made Judges dependent upon his will alone for the tenure of their offices and the amount and payment of their salaries." The analogy is not perfect, but I think that the advocates of the President's plan should consider it too close for comfort. The War of Independence was fought in order that the American people should have the right to govern themselves and, therefore, the right to pass upon all fundamental changes in their form of government. It is idle to contend that this is not one of those fundamental changes, and if *The Nation* were true to its traditions, it should, I think, indignantly demand that the people be given that right.

Finally, does *The Nation* approve of the camouflage arguments concerning aging judges and congested dockets under cover of which it was attempted to slip this proposal through? Does it approve of all the mass of innuendo attributing dust storms, floods, and various other acts of God to the Supreme Court? I cannot believe it possible. *The Nation* has lost itself in unjudicial partisanship at a moment when I, for one, should like to see it come out, like Senator Wheeler, Oswald Garrison Villard, and many other liberals, and say to the President: "Enough of this camouflage; enough of these attempts to discredit your adversaries as 'defeatist lawyers'; we like your objectives, but we don't like your methods. You can now attain your objectives with no sacrifice of American principles if you will not be stubborn. And if that be treason, make the most of it."

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Trotsky on the U.S.S.R.

October into Thermidor

BY BENJAMIN STOLBERG

I

"THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED"* is one of the ablest polemics in the history of literature. It is at once passionate and disciplined. It is profound in its insight into the nature and sickness of class relations. It combines great sophistication with luminous simplicity. And the felicity of phrase is startling. Even more startling is Trotsky's tenderness toward the Soviet Union in view of the slanderous savagery of the onslaughts against him and the deadly accuracy of his counter-thrusts. His attitude toward the Thermidor is one of Olympian indignation, but also of such deep and anxious concern as you and I could never feel. After all, Lenin and he made the revolution.

But above all, as John Chamberlain writes, this polemic is a work of great moral purity: it moves on a high level of intellectual taste, controversial integrity, historical criticism, and revolutionary conscience. Even the sharpness of its wit and irony seem sterilized against malice, trickery, or innuendo. It is marred by no self-pity, no personal hatred, no recrimination, no vulgar pride. What people take for egotism in Trotsky is not egotism. It is a keen sense of the drama of history, and of his own rightful place in that drama. As sheer story and indictment of the Thermidorean evolution in the Soviet Union this pamphlet will live and be studied as long as men live in civilization and study its history.

But for all that, this polemic is *far* more illuminating as review and critique of what actually happened than as an explanation of the deepest causes of the Thermidor. Fundamentally Trotsky fails to tell us why, *really* why, the October revolution, through all its vicissitudes and zigzags, moved toward the Thermidorean reaction with all the fatality of a Greek tragedy. And in failing to do so, he leaves the reader unsatisfied, with a touch of revolutionary hypochondria: Could it have been—can it ever be—otherwise? It may be irrelevant, and hence unfair, to seek in a polemic for the key to the revolutionary riddle. Yet the fact remains that here the greatest of living Marxists fails, as Engels and Lenin failed before him, to solve the Marxian dilemma, which is: How can revolution avoid a Thermidorean end? How can a revolutionary dictatorship keep from evolving into a privileged bureaucracy? Why do the Robespierres and the Saint Justs, the Lenins and Trotskys lose to a directory or an apparatus; and finally to bourgeois or proletarian Caesarism? Why did even our American Revolution, though its base was partially laid in seventeenth-century England and though it enjoyed the whole nineteenth century as an expanding frontier of democracy, gradually grow into a Thermidorean reaction? Why did the Jeffersons and Jacksons and Thaddeus Stevenses and their successors cumulatively lose to the Supreme Court oligarchy, which for 137 years has been at bottom nothing but a Fabian Thermidor?

Of course, the conventional answer is that a Thermidor introduces and develops political and cultural reaction for the sake of economic and social exploitation. But that is not the point. The riddle is: Why is revolution unable to prevent it? Why is Trotsky, who is undoubtedly the inheritor of Lenin's ends, now in Mexico? And why is Stalin, the logical epigone of Lenin's means, in the Kremlin? Why does the left always make the revolution and the right always write the constitution?

For all his revolutionary sophistication, Trotsky's answer is the orthodox Marxian answer. Czarist Russia, he says, was a backward and barbarous country, at a low, semi-colonial productive stage. Russia's labor was primitive, her peasantry archaic, her technology simple, her heritage cruel. Repeatedly Trotsky quotes the young Marx: "A development of the productive forces is the absolutely necessary practical premise [of communism], because without it want is generalized, and with want the struggle for necessities begins again, and that means that all the old junk must revive." Moreover, socialism in one country cannot win permanently. As Rosa Luxemburg wrote, "In Russia the problem could be posed; it could not be solved," unless the social revolution quickly developed internationally, especially in the advanced countries. All these reasons, Trotsky repeats over and over again, explain why the Soviet dictatorship is not "withering," why soviet democracy is not unfolding, why the Thermidor. And he might have added that revolution is war; that it must use terror against counter-revolution; and that the use of revolutionary terror hides within it its Thermidorean reflex. "The guillotine of a Robespierre is always followed in history by the sword of a Napoleon," said Prince Bülow.

All the reasons which Trotsky gives are, or may be, true. But they are visibly pregnant with their own contradictions. And the Marxian revolutionary politics—as against its economics—offers no solution. It may be true that the prerevolutionary backwardness of a country determines the degree of its Thermidorean savagery; that is only saying that the past of a culture patterns its future. But that does not mean that if a series of Octobers had rapidly occurred in Berlin and Paris and London, Thermidorean reactions could not have followed. On the contrary, the far more powerful counter-revolutionary forces in the West—so powerful that after all they were able to abort all social revolutions—could have been defeated, if at all, only by a revolutionary terror so strenuous and complex that it might have ended in an international Thermidor, less cruelly Byzantine but far more hopeless than Stalinism. Moreover, though Trotsky is eternally right that socialism cannot be built in one country, it is

* "The Revolution Betrayed." By Leon Trotsky. Translated by Max Eastman. Doubleday, Doran and Company. $2.50.

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equally true that the unevenness of international development precluded the quick succession of socialist revolutions in the West. Surely, Trotsky is too good a Marxist to blame the personnel of the Second International entirely for the miscarriage of European socialism. And from this it follows that though the Comintern in China and Germany and everywhere else has partly served as a foil for fascist reaction, it is *also* true that its reactionary confusion, at least to a considerable degree, is the *result* of capitalist stabilization-toward-decay and the sharpening of imperialist gangsterism the world over. Lenin believed that the best way to attack Western imperialism was in such a semi-colonial country as Russia. He was going to shake the City of London in China and India. Lenin and Trotsky acted on this belief and won a revolution. But the historic reality since October certainly proves that you cannot shake Wall Street except in America. Financial capitalism recuperated from the shock of October, reorganized itself into a reactionary offensive—from Hitler to Baldwin; and has driven the Soviet Union into its Thermidorean diplomacy, of which the Stalintern is a part, and into a revolutionary retreat, of which the bureaucracy is the vanguard. That the tradition of Russia endows this Thermidor with its own peculiar ferocity, that Stalin acts far more like Nechayev than he thinks like a Marxist, is almost irrelevant.

That orthodox Marxism did not fully realize all the terrible implications of international economic and cultural disparity does not invalidate its theory of permanent revolution. It merely means, as history since the World War has proved, that the international conquest of socialist power requires an infinitely more sophisticated revolutionary understanding and strategy; and possibly a couple of centuries, not years. That is not a dilemma. It is just a lot of trouble. The real Marxian dilemma lies in its revolutionary *politics,* based on its theories of the revolutionary conquest of power and the nature of the state after the proletarian victory. Nowhere in his writings does Trotsky analyze this dilemma. And between the lines of this book it cries out for solution.

This essential weakness of Marxism lies in its purely metaphysical conception of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, based on the revolutionary instincts of labor, which is quite as much a fiction as Rousseau's General Will based on the Social Contract. Such inventions can make revolutions but they cannot fulfil their promise. For there can be only a dictatorship *over* the proletariat *by* a minority. And this minority is necessarily an intellectual minority with all the vices of its virtues, a minority whose final interests are by no means those of the workers. Dictatorships are personal-oligarchic, not impersonal-democratic. A dictatorship is not the best possible means for its own dissolution in the service of a socialist or any other society. Alas, it is not the dictatorial state that "withers," in spite of Engels's careless remark which Lenin scholastically elaborated in "The State and Revolution." What "withers" is the original revolutionary leadership and the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses. The dictatorship of the proletariat is far less apt to "habituate" itself to its own atrophy than it is to perpetuate itself. To blame Stalin for not remodeling the Kremlin into his own mausoleum and the Soviet apparatus for not dismantling itself is to ask history for miracles.

All this does not mean that socialism can be brought about by the "gradual" methods of the Fabian sell-out. Nor does it mean that Trotsky, as a man of action, can do otherwise than attack the Thermidor as he finds it, which is his simple duty on the heroic scale of his role. But it does mean that Marxism has not yet formulated means sufficiently realistic and prophylactic for its own socialist and moral ends. As yet Marxism is incomparably superior as the critique of capitalist decay than as a guide to socialist conquest and construction.

II

And now what is a Thermidor? It is not a counter-revolution, for a counter-revolution aims to reestablish the basic economy of the overthrown regime. A Thermidor is the new stratification of the victorious revolutionary class into masters and men—on the higher productive level which the revolution has conquered and within the logic of this new order. This new grouping of society gradually crystallizes itself into a new hierarchy, ranging from Thermidorean parvenu down to revolutionary pariah. New forms of exploitation arise, old cultural barbarisms revive under Jacobin disguises, new privileges and disabilities take shape until the new liberation becomes a new slavery; all, to be sure, on the advanced stage of a higher form of economic production. Such is the nature of Thermidor.

The Russian Thermidor differs from the French in time and space and culture. But the genesis of the Thermidorean reaction is almost the same. Just as the French Thermidor did not to any significant degree revert to the feudal economy of the ancient regime, but founded and fostered bourgeois exploitation, just so Stalinism has not to any significant degree reintroduced capitalist exploitation but is creating new forms of proletarian exploitation. And the only way it can do it is by reclassifying society. The French Thermidor formed and established the power of the *big* bourgeoisie over the *petty* bourgeoisie, which had fought and bled in the revolution. And so Stalinism has created a *big* proletariat over the *petty* proletariat, the rank and file of October. Trotsky, the Marxian purist, refuses to call the *big* proletariat—the new bureaucracy of executives, technicians, intellectuals of all kinds, the upper strata of labor and the peasantry, and, above all, the party apparatus—a new "class." For in the strict Marxian sense "classes" not merely differ in their functional relation to the productive process but must derive their income in different forms from the class contradictions of this process: profit versus wages. And since in the U. S. S. R. all income is paid by the state, not in different forms but in different amounts and services, there is according to Trotsky no "class struggle" in Russia but mere "social antagonisms." Hence, he argues with Marxian scholasticism, the Soviet Thermidor requires no social revolution but merely a political change to release the democratic process. Maybe. But it would seem more realistic to admit that the Marxian

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theory of the growth toward classlessness under a proletarian dictatorship has so far proved to be false. The sociology of class formation is visibly at work under the Thermidor. The Soviet citizen owns his national means of production very much as the American citizen owns his national government. But universal ownership in Russia and universal suffrage in America are so largely legendary in power precisely because in both instances the state reflects far more sensitively class influences than democratic welfare. To be sure, presocialist Russia has solved the peculiarly capitalist contradictions. But far from having solved class contradictions, it is creating new ones. And just as bourgeois society developed within itself the economic proletariat, so Soviet society is growing within itself a political plebs.

III

And now let us epitomize briefly Trotsky's indictment. The economic conquests of October are still in the main secure, though Trotsky indicates how the new "social antagonisms" lead to new inner contradictions and hence to economic differentiation. But the cultural conquests of October have become a burlesque of revolutionary egalitarianism. The social distance which separates the higher bureaucracy from the masses is widening. And it is measurable in a scale of privileges. The bureaucracy enjoys—hierarchically—preferential housing, automobiles, luxuries, services of all kinds, including menial, paid of course not from personal profit but by the state. This new process of social classification can be enforced only by an indisputable "party line," interpreted by an infallible dictator and enforced by an inviolate oligarchy. Philosophers, mathematicians, novelists, musicians, and even the ballet must bow before this theocratic Marxism. The new theology can be criticized only ritually not ideologically. The works of Lenin are erratically edited, the Marxian classics are bastardized, revolutionary history is shamelessly rewritten, appointing Stalin a posteriori to the revolutionary accomplishments of Trotsky. Childhood and youth are regimented. Divorce is made more difficult. Abortion has been prohibited—to the ambassador's wife, of course, no less than to the peasant woman. A rigorous caste system has been reintroduced in the army. Of course, socialist construction is releasing tremendous spiritual forces: illiteracy is being rapidly defeated, new public services are being introduced, social work of every kind, especially public health, is being advanced. Everything but socialist freedom is expanding. The pall of the terror lies over opinion. And the theory that in 1937 the Soviet Union cannot afford real socialist freedom of thought, that astrophysicists must first guess right Stalin's opinion, is beneath consideration.

Economically, the Soviet Union has made tremendous advances, proving to the whole world that even presocialist planning in a backward country can do wonders compared to the tantrums of capitalist decline, even in the most advanced nations. Trotsky describes with great detail and enthusiasm these amazing achievements, every one of which flows from October. Once Russia had freed herself from the maze of her primitive-capitalist contradictions, she could develop her empire much as we did in Reconstruction days when freed from the destructive interference of the slave power. Quite correctly Trotsky points out that her industrialization program was taken from the left opposition, just as indeed Stalin took over its program of rural collectivization. And with equal correctness he points out that since each of these programs was taken over when faced with economic catastrophe, they were brutally costly in human suffering.

The Five-Year Plan, when finally adopted, forced quantitative production at the expense of quality. Terrific suffering resulted from the need to build capital at the expense of consumers' goods. Collectivization, too long delayed and too quickly forced, drove the peasantry to kill more than half their livestock and created the famine of 1932. A bureaucracy rushing through such an ambitious plan of socialist construction under such primitive conditions could do so only through terrorism, which feeds on scapegoats. Hence the belated adoption of "Trotskyism" led to ever more terroristic attacks on Trotskyism, which came to include all criticism; and in turn this erratic terror frightened the bureaucracy out of its creative wits into technological and executive conformity.

That labor in Russia is exploited, Soviet statistics, weighted as they are to hide the fact, clearly indicate. In 1935 the average wage per person, if one democratically includes both the director of a trust and the cleaning woman, was about 2,300 rubles. But the real average wages of the Soviet masses ranged from 1,200 to 1,500 rubles, which meant destitution under the prevailing prices. And rising above the masses are the Stakhanovites, earning more than 1,000 rubles a month through a system of speed-up based on piece work. At the top, of course, is the privileged bureaucracy, whose income can be measured not only in money but in the perquisites of status. The Thermidor has formulated a grotesque paraphrase of the famous Marxist dictum: From the workers according to their ability, to the bureaucrats according to their needs.

So much for "socialism in one country," which has been stabilized by the new constitution. This constitution permits voting by secret plebiscite, for alternative men and measures within the party line. It permits freedom of speech, conscience, and assembly within the dictates of the politbureau. It allows the inheritance of personal goods, of the hut of the mujik no less than the country estate of the high commissar. And it abolishes economic representation in favor of geographical parliamentarianism. The international diplomacy of "socialism in one country" we have seen.

The struggle between Trotsky and Stalin, who are but two symbols, will go on as long as the world is in a revolutionary ferment. It is the struggle between October and the Thermidor in the Soviet Union, their refraction upon the world stage, their respective significance to the working class. Stalinism is in power. Trotskyism accepts too rigorously the Marxian metaphysics of power to gain the "permanent revolution" in a dislocated world. But Trotsky himself is, I believe, winning over the Thermidor in his influence on the world intelligentsia, and is likely

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to grow as the revolutionary conscience of the European proletarian vanguard. And the reasons for this amazing career lie in his personality, in his many-sided genius as historian, indomitable revolutionary, and man of action.

Leon Trotsky's Failure

BY LOUIS FISCHER

FORMERLY Trotsky claimed the policies of agricultural collectivization and super-industrialization as his own. "Stalin," the Trotskyists said, "threw Trotsky out and then stole his ideas." In this book Trotsky has no difficulty in disproving these contentions.

"To the growth of individual farming in the country," the Trotskyist program declared in 1926, "we must oppose a swifter growth of the collective farms. It is necessary systematically year by year to set aside a considerable sum to aid the poor peasants organized in collectives." There had been collectives in Soviet Russia since 1921. Trotsky wanted to give them more financial aid so that they could continue to compete with individual farming, which was growing and which he did not propose to suppress. It was assumed that by this method (p. 73) "the socialist transformation of agriculture . . . would be accomplished in the course of decades." Trotsky would never have been Trotsky had he urged the destruction of private capitalism in the villages and the quick, nation-wide socialization of farming; he did not believe in that. His theory of permanent revolution led him to think that the Bolsheviks could merely hold on to the socialist "commanding heights" in the cities until the world revolution enabled them to introduce socialist farming. It was largely because Trotsky did not foresee the possibility of collectivizing Soviet agriculture that he rejected the Stalin thesis of socialism in one country.

Nor did the Trotskyist program demand the immediate crushing of the kulak. Trotsky wished to use the kulak. "To accelerate industrialization," reads one of the planks of the opposition platform in 1926, "in particular by way of increased taxation on the kulak." Now the kulaks were a threat, but there were not many millions of them and they were not very rich. Trotsky's policies of increased taxation and a forced loan would soon have produced passive resistance and the refusal to feed the city. Actually this happened in 1927. A Five-Year Plan financed by the few golden eggs of the kulak goose would have failed. Stalin financed the plan by means of inflation. That was at heavy cost, but no other way was open. Trotsky, however, opposed inflation. In 1927 his platform demanded "a guaranty of the unconditional stability of the money unit," and in 1932: "Stop the process of inflation with an iron hand." This would have stopped industrialization, and Trotsky indeed admits that "the defenders of 'tortoise tempo' and the super-industrializers had, it seemed, temporarily changed places." Permanently, not temporarily. The Trotskyists had no sooner advocated super-industrialization in 1926 then they retreated from it in 1927.

Herein lies the explanation of Trotsky's fall. With exemplary courage Trotsky in this book faces the question of "why Stalin triumphed." Why is it that the scintillating Trotsky with all his grand ideas was defeated by the "mediocre" Stalin? Trotsky's answer is an unsatisfactory amalgam. There was a reaction after the revolution, the masses were tired, the demobilized Red Army commanders carried military discipline back into civilian life, "the outstanding representatives of the working class either died in the civil war or rose a few steps higher and broke away from the masses," and the Soviet population was despondent after the defeat of revolutionary attempts abroad. This complete lack of faith in the reproductive powers of the revolution helps to explain why Trotsky today lives in Mexico City. Revolution devours its children and produces more and better children. The history of the U. S. S. R. proves this every day, but Trotsky has no faith in the second generation of revolutionists. He says: "As for the young bureaucrats, they have been chosen and educated by the elders, frequently from among their own offspring. [This, incidentally, is one of Trotsky's many unproved and unprovable calumnies.] These people could not have achieved the October revolution, but they were perfectly suited to exploit it." The unfairness of such a statement is patent. Kaganovich, Zhdanov, Postishev, Beria, Mezhlauk, and numerous other Soviet leaders of today, most of them now in their forties, were too young to play prominent roles in 1917.

Trotsky mentions all the factors which in his opinion led to the repression of his faction in 1928. He has forgotten one. On November 7, 1927, he personally attempted to stage an anti-Stalin demonstration in the streets of Moscow while the garrison and the civil population were parading through the Red Square. Had the attempt succeeded, the result would have been a Trotskyist coup d'état. This was a desperate last card which drew retaliatory arrests, and it failed, as Trotskyism had to fail in the Soviet Union, because its leader had nothing to offer. His policy was to trust in the world revolution, which, however, was receding into the background as a result of the stabilization of capitalism after 1924, and in the meantime not to build socialism in Russia by means of super-industrialization and collectivization. Such a negative program would have paralyzed the country's spirit and produced the worst kind of reaction. In spite of the stagnation of the world revolutionary movement, Stalin knew how to stimulate a new revolutionary élan for domestic upbuilding. This is his greatest service. It made possible vast achievements in village and city.

Trotsky pays perfunctory tribute to this progress in a brief first chapter, and devotes the rest of his book to criticism filled with bitterness and hatred of the Soviet regime. Years of persecution must inevitably result in such bitterness and hatred, but these are not qualities which produce a trustworthy book on Soviet conditions. The volume is full of warped perspectives and myriads of affirmations whose fine literary style and emphasis are no substitute for the proof which is absent. With greater justice, if one trusts in the material and spiritual reserves of the revolution, a writer could devote one chapter to

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the numerous and serious shortcoming of the Soviet Union and the remainder of his space to its great victories. If, because the Webbs and Pritt, the great British lawyer and member of Parliament, reacted favorably to Soviet events, Trotsky can say that the former wrote their big work on the U. S. S. R. under the "dictation" of the "Soviet bureaucracy" and that the latter is in the pay of Moscow, he does not seem to possess the judicious attitude necessary for an assessment of Soviet changes. This is a book by Trotsky on Stalin's life work, and one can no more expect objectivity in it than one could expect objectivity in a book by Stalin on Trotsky's role in the revolution. It is a highly polemical, fighting book full of debaters' tricks.

In general, the book does not assume much knowledge of the U. S. S. R. or of socialist theory on the part of its readers. The result is that many of its theoretical sections lay Trotsky open to the charge of perverting Marxist teaching. He quotes (p. 60) from a *Pravda* article: "During the second five-year period the last relics of capitalist elements in our economy will be liquidated." Thereon Trotsky comments: "From the point of view of this perspective the state ought conclusively to die away during the same period, for where the 'last relics' of capitalism are liquidated the state has nothing to do."

This Trotskyist stand is contrary to communist doctrine and common sense. Lenin said, in describing the characteristics of socialism, which he, like Marx, called the first or lowest phase of communism: "The state is withering away in so far as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes, and consequently no class can be suppressed. But the state has not yet altogether withered away since there still remains the protection of 'bourgeois law,' which sanctifies real inequality. For the complete extinction of the state complete communism is necessary."

Trotsky believes that when capitalism is finished, the state disappears. But Lenin believed, with Marx, that the state would still exist. This is pivotal to Trotsky's philosophy, for he suggests that since the state has not withered away, as he thinks it should under socialism, there is no socialism in the Soviet Union. Moreover, he is surprised that inequalities linger in the U. S. S. R. Marx, Engels, and Lenin, on the other hand, always foresaw inequality as a characteristic of the first stage of communism. The petit-bourgeois intellectuals, to whom in recent years Trotsky has made his greatest appeal, apparently supposed that the demise of capitalism would immediately snuff out all injustice and inequality. But Marx pointed out that socialism would, in its early years, be "in every respect tainted economically, morally, and intellectually with the hereditary diseases of the old society from whose womb it is emerging." Only a dreamer or a blind critic would expect the Soviet Union to be a perfect society already. Trotsky's term "socialist equality" is a contradiction within itself.

Nobody knows the laws governing the emergence of a socialist system. There has never been one before. Marx and Lenin refused to predict how and in what period the state would wither away. It is logical that to be able to wither away with safety, a socialist regime must first be strong enough to crush all its internal enemies and be reasonably secure against foreign attack. Withering away, therefore, is not a process which begins the moment the revolution breaks out. There is first a crescendo of state power and then a gradual diminuendo. In the U. S. S. R. this latter phase set in, naturally enough, with the destruction of village capitalists. It expresses itself in the severe limitations on the G. P. U. and in the promulgation of the new Soviet constitution by which the Soviet state apparatus and the Communist Party abdicate parts of their prerogative. Trotsky attaches too little importance to these epochal reforms. It is difficult for him to believe that the bureaucracy will undermine itself. Yet that is the very reason for the newly introduced secret ballot. Trotsky quotes Stalin to this effect (p. 65). He does not even try to refute Stalin's assertion. In fact, he partly accepts it. But to accept it altogether would mean to scrap his entire thesis of the omnipotence and self-perpetuation of the bureaucracy.

The evolution of inequality is as uncharted as the disappearance of the state. Trotsky himself says (p. 67) that "a successful socialist construction is unthinkable without including in the planned system a direct personal interest of the producer and the consumer, their egoism." That is right and that is the basis of Soviet inequality. Whether there will be more or less inequality this year than in the year before depends on circumstances. Trotsky contends that "so long as it is impossible to guarantee genuine equality," in other words, as long as socialism lasts, there is an "iron necessity to give birth to and support a privileged minority." The only question is whether with advancing prosperity this minority must not grow into a majority. By becoming a Stakhanovist (efficient worker) or by taking courses which are open to all, anyone can immediately join the "privileged." An aristocracy, however, limits its membership.

Even Trotsky, to the embarrassment, if that were possible, of Max Eastman, his "friend and confidant," admits that "the distribution of this earth's goods in the Soviet Union, we do not doubt, is incomparably more democratic than it was in Czarist Russia, and even than it is in the most democratic countries of the West." With the improvement of Soviet productivity and technique the disparity between the real incomes of engineers, high officials, and workingmen is reduced. Stakhanovism leads in that direction. Trotsky maintains in a whole chapter that until Soviet productivity of labor is higher than capitalist productivity of labor there can be no full socialism. All agree. Socialism would be an anomaly unless it advanced beyond capitalism. But Soviet Russia began as a very backward nation and, leaving Czarist standards far behind, has made gigantic strides toward modern technical proficiency. Over a period of years, with a planned economy eliminating the waste of under-capacity production, of economic depressions, of competition, and of commercial advertising, labor is perhaps already as productive in the U. S. S. R. as in the average capitalist land. Moreover, recent events in the air of Spain have demonstrated that Soviet technique may be superior not only to German and Italian technique but even to French

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and American. This is one instance. There are more, and there will be many more. The U. S. S. R.'s prospects are limitless.

Judgments about events to come depend on one's attitude to the present. Trotsky is pessimistic about Soviet trends unless the present leadership is overthrown. The friends of the U. S. S. R., whom he belabors with such ineffective scorn, are optimistic. Moreover, the devotion of the Soviet masses to loyalist Spain and the performance of Soviet citizens in Spain fortify a deep-seated faith in the health, strength, and self-curative qualities of the Bolshevik revolution. The illnesses which Trotsky diagnoses and exaggerates with such glee will pass as others have.

The Price Boom

BY ELIOT JANEWAY

LABOR is in the saddle, the newspapers say. As wage increase follows wage increase, the impression spreads that labor is at last about to enter the promised land. The public is being told that big business is not only willing to meet labor halfway but is actually sharing the profits of prosperity with labor in truly New Deal fashion.

The only justification for this legend is to be found in the belated and modest 5 and 10 per cent wage increases which industry is generally bestowing upon labor. The wage increases in the headlines, moreover, tell only half the story. Behind the headlines, in the financial pages at the back of the paper, market reports reveal booming prices out of all proportion to the easily absorbed rise in labor costs. Wages have risen. But the rise has already been completely and shamefully outstripped by the price boom.

Some notion of what is in store for wage-earning and middle-class families may be gathered from the cost-of-living index compiled by the National Industrial Conference Board. In the short space of a month, from January to February, the index jumped 3 per cent—a spectacular rise. It now stands 4.4 per cent above the level for February, 1936, and 21.6 per cent above its April, 1933, low. The price of clothing rose 9 per cent from January to February; rents rose 7 per cent in that period. The purchasing power of the 1923 dollar, which was 119.8 cents in February, 1936, had fallen to 115.1 cents in January, 1937, and by February, 1937, it stood at only 114.7 cents. Nevertheless, the price boom has not yet seriously affected the industries selling goods in the retail mass market. It is still confined to the industries which supply the fabricating and consumers'-goods industries. Its full impact upon the cost of living will not be felt until, for example, higher copper prices show in radio prices and higher cotton prices in the cost of shirts.

At bottom, the boom is speculative. It is based upon the anticipation of an indefinitely prolonged recovery, extended by armament orders the world over. For this reason the first commodities to be pushed up to 1918 levels were the metals, the raw materials of heavy industry. Leading the metal boom was copper. Last September, when the British rearmament program was beginning to stimulate copper demand, "the quotations of Northern Rhodesian copper producers continued to advance" on the London Stock Exchange. Forewarned, these companies might have been expected to increase production. They did the opposite. The report of the British South Africa Company, which derives a good part of its income from its holdings in the three leading African copper mines, is revealing. The company's royalties rose by $2,000,000 over its 1935 income. But the copper produced by these three mines in 1936 actually fell 20,000 tons below the 1935 figure as a result of the copper producers' restriction agreement, which was permitted to remain in force long after the boom began.

The consequence of this deliberately provoked copper shortage is reflected in the American metal market. For the better part of a year foreign demand has been forcing up the American price from 7 to 9 cents to its present peak of 17 cents. Seventeen-cent copper has brought undreamed of prosperity to Western mining companies. The case of the Calumet and Hecla mine is typical. During 1936 the company did quite well, producing nearly 60,000,000 pounds of copper at a cost of 6.2 cents a pound, and nearly 20,000,000 pounds at a cost of 4.51 cents, and averaging 9.80 cents a pound on sales. Certainly the company enjoyed a fair profit margin. With copper at 17 cents, the margin is doubled; no lobby would have dared demand as much. This unhealthy profit inflation is shared by the rest of the industry. Anaconda Wire and Cable announces a 62 per cent jump over 1935 in manufacturing profit and a 122 per cent advance in net income. Phelps Dodge reports that 1936 net income rose 85 per cent over 1935. The Phelps Dodge statement, moreover, reveals that "as a result of last year's large sales of copper the company has only nominal stocks" left. Anaconda and Kennecott, the industry's leading units, are opening their marginal, hitherto unprofitable mines. Both companies report a disparity between production increase and profit rise in 1936.

The copper shortage is duplicated by the lead shortage. At its recent meeting the St. Joseph Lead Company, the world's largest producer, deplored the price advance as "unhealthy," and admitted that the buying wave provoked by it had left the St. Joe Company alone in the industry with substantial stocks on hand. The tale of zinc is still more alarming. The supply, according to the

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American Zinc Institute, has sunk to its lowest level "in years." And the ravages of the depression have left many refineries in such condition that "an increase in output can be achieved only gradually." The production of tin was also drastically curtailed in the effort to bolster prices, which are now following the same spectacular course as those of the other metals. By March 10 tin had passed 66 cents a pound and was selling above the average for every year since 1918.

The astonishing course of the metal boom is accurately summarized by the *American Metal Market,* a trade paper whose index weighs the several metals by tonnage and market importance. Its composite average of metal prices had fallen to 6.824 cents for the years 1930-34. By 1936 it had rallied to 8.245 cents. On March 10 it stood at 13.065 cents—a bare .03 of a cent below the 1929 high and only some 3 cents below the war-time top. Thus metal prices have anticipated the upward movement of the business cycle. And their action may very well prove disastrous to the recovery curve. For the cost of industrial production—and as a consequence ultimate retail prices—has been jacked up to boom heights while mass income has only begun to climb. The strain which the metal boom has put upon recovery is indicated by the news that the rise in the price of tin is stimulating frantic research into the efficacy of aluminum, glass, and cardboard as substitutes, and that copper prices are provoking similar interest in the uses of aluminum and stainless steel. The touch of *Ersatz* rounds out the character of this war boom.

The metal boom has already had an ominous effect on the steel market. In spite of the successive Detroit strikes *Automotive Industries* reports that the automobile industry is going into spring production with inadequate steel stocks in hand. Steel orders have risen 40 per cent above the February level. The steel companies are opening their books for the second quarter of the year, but they have no steel to sell. And steel's customers, taking their cue from copper's customers, are panic-stricken by the combination of price boom and shortage. Far from giving them pause, the drastic increases in steel prices are whipping them up to buy everything in sight. The magazine *Steel* reports "buying undisturbed by price advances." Because of European arms demand, "thousands of tons of pig iron have been shipped out of the country . . . and imports are dwindling" to zero. United States Steel is now paying dearly for the reactionary technological policy to which it has long adhered. The rush for steel has grown overnight, and while it finds the steel industry producing at over 90 per cent of capacity, the figure for United States Steel is nearer 85 per cent. The corporation is blowing in admittedly obsolete and inefficient furnaces. But in a sellers' market anything goes.

In this whirl the trumps are in labor's hands. Steel must be produced. Costs are no longer a consideration. Each new upward surge on the copper market adds to the steel momentum. When the price of ferromanganese rose $15 a ton and chromium $11.50 a ton, industry barely noticed the effect upon steel prices. And so with labor costs. The steel industry must pay any wage demanded of it. Instead, however, of being made to compensate labor for years of niggardliness, the corporations have been able to turn the recent wage increase to their own advantage. For after the $2.80 to $3 a ton wage increase has been added to the increased cost of raw materials, the increase of $5.50 a ton to the selling price leaves the manufacturers with an increased profit margin of some 50 to 70 cents a ton. In short, prices have risen ahead of wages or even raw materials. As the inflation spreads from industry to industry, prices rise more and more steeply. And already the boom is felt beyond the steel industry. The *Journal of Commerce* bears witness that "manufacturers of industrial machinery . . . are seeking protection for profit margins by inserting clauses in new contracts giving them the right to raise prices in the event labor costs are revised upwards"; this before what was the copper ripple and what has become the steel wave have inundated the consumers'-goods market.

Rising prices are not confined to metals. Rubber, which costs about 7 cents a pound to produce, is selling at 27 cents, with 30 cents and more foreseen as its goal. Production quotas are being lifted, but the market remains insatiable. Under the influence of the rubber boom tire prices have been raised 6 per cent, the fourth advance within a year, and a fifth advance has already been announced. Hides also have risen, from 11 cents to 15¾ cents in a year. Shoe prices are following suit. Last month shoe prices rose 5 to 10 per cent. This month one national chain has advanced women's shoes from $1.98 to $2.19, and a Chicago chain plans a 12½ per cent increase. Lumber is showing the same tendency, prices having been advanced after the settlement of the Pacific Coast marine workers' strike. Now the sawmill workers are demanding an increase, and the owners have announced that prices will rise with wages. The textile raw materials are paralleling the metals. Cotton, for which Mr. Roosevelt once foresaw a relapse to the "horse-and-buggy" price of 6 cents, has gone to 15 cents. Silk, only a month ago wobbling with the yen and the Tokyo Cabinet, leaped ahead 3½ to 6 cents in a day. Rayon companies, unable to cope with the volume of advance buying, are expanding their capacity by 20 to 50 per cent.

In one pre-consumption-goods industry after another manufacturers are buying desperately, their eyes fixed on the calendar. They want to be covered on raw materials when autumn comes. And what if the spending public, remembering the last depression, balks at paying war-time prices? Industry will have only itself to blame for the panic into which the boom can collapse. Meanwhile the moral of the price boom is not lost upon the more responsible sections of the business community. Commenting upon the military roots of the metal boom, the great London metal house of Brandeis, Goldschmidt says, "What normal trade and common sense could not do, distrust and fear have accomplished."

Labor cannot ride high on a prosperity wave that rises with war preparations. The price boom, in its onslaught upon living standards, is the first forerunner of the crisis which a new 1914 will inevitably prepare for the labor movement.

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Reconstruction in Puerto Rico

BY OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD

RECONSTRUCTION is the one hope of Puerto Rico, whether it remains a possession of the United States or achieves independence. Reconstruction is the effort—started years too late—to conquer overpopulation, economic misery, political unrest, and to establish sanitation and economic well-being in the island. This contest is all-important today. How does it stand? What is its program? Is it planning for the long pull ahead, and does it really mean to grapple with the fundamental economic evils? These are vital questions.

The Puerto Rican reconstruction policy of the Department of the Interior is based largely upon the Chardon Report, drawn up in 1934 by the Puerto Rico Policy Commission, composed of three Puerto Ricans—Carlos E. Chardon, at that time chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico, R. Menendez Ramos, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, and Professor R. Fernandez Garcia, head of the university's department of chemistry. The report was a careful study of economic conditions with recommendations for progress and reform. Among its fundamental proposals was the recapture of the land for the people from the sugar companies. Emigration and industrialization were mentioned; birth-control, so obviously essential to deal with the dreadful overpopulation, was casually alluded to. For the work of reconstruction a total amount of $42,000,000 was set aside in Washington; and this first attempt to reorganize Puerto Rico on a large scale was enthusiastically welcomed.

Today the ardor of some of the liberal and radical groups for reconstruction has cooled. They charge that its original underlying purposes have been altered for the worse and that a different emphasis is being put upon the program by the administrator, Dr. Ernest H. Gruening, to whom the President two years ago assigned this task in addition to his duties as Director of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions of the Department of the Interior. It is declared that progress is too slow, that the land problem is not being advanced aggressively, that considerable money has been wasted; and the critics resent several dismissals from the P. R. R. A. These criticisms of Dr. Gruening come largely from those who were formerly his personal friends among the liberals and who were at first ardent supporters of the program. As I see the situation, after a brief survey, it is this: There have been mistakes, lost motion, and some waste, such as are inevitable in every pioneering undertaking—certainly they have been found in every relief and reconstruction project on the mainland. But it is a plan to reconstruct Puerto Rico by Puerto Ricans according to a Puerto Rican program—a gigantic and complex program which in the main has been tackled boldly and effectively. For the mistakes made by himself personally and by those whom he picked as subordinates Dr. Gruening will have to shoulder the responsibility; but on the whole, from what I could see in driving through the island, the P. R. R. A. is doing a big job of the greatest worth and significance, under an able director, Miles H. Fairbank. I do not believe it is now possible to maintain that there has been treason to the fundamental policy of Puerto Rico for the Puerto Ricans, but time will show.

Let us return to the four vital proposals for saving Puerto Rico. It is true that the Administration has failed to carry on with two of them—birth control and immigration. Birth-control clinics were started in fifteen places and then closed after protests from Catholic sources. The answer is that Franklin Roosevelt was a candidate for reelection, and his campaign manager, James A. Farley, is a very good Catholic. At any rate, without direct proof, I venture my reputation on the assertion that the order to shut down the clinics did not originate with Dr. Gruening. As to moving large masses of people from the island to the American mainland, or to foreign countries, that is something to be handled in Washington only by Dr. Gruening's superiors. It is the State Department which would have to negotiate with Santo Domingo or Venezuela, and so far as I am aware neither Secretary Hull nor President Roosevelt has moved. It seems to me that Secretary Ickes might have sought before this to move some thousands to certain of our states—with the aid and consent of Congress. The excuse is, I suppose, that a government dealing with resettlement projects at home, especially for those ousted by the purchase of submarginal farm lands, and with the victims of dust storms and floods, has had its hands rather full. But these excuses do not offset the fact that the government *must* act in this situation; criticism of the delay is justified.

With respect to industrialization, some efforts are under way, but until the obstacles which have prevented private capital from establishing factories and industrial undertakings of various kinds are removed, and some way of preventing "dumping" by mainland firms is worked out, nothing far-reaching will be achieved. The government is building a cement factory to produce cement for the P. R. R. A. at a saving of at least 50 cents a barrel. Various rural electric projects are well on the road to completion—electrification is essential if there is to be large-scale industrialization. The rehabilitation program of various areas calls for warehouses, canning plants, refrigerating facilities and abattoirs, distributing centers and community workshops for woodworking and the making of clay products and clothing. But profoundly to affect conditions many millions more will be needed.

The fourth and most important large-scale proposal for reconstruction is the recapture of the land. Here is

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where Dr. Gruening's administration is most severely criticized. The first step, about which the controversy centers, was the purchase for $3,500,000 of the Centrale Lafayette (*centrale* is the Puerto Rican name for a great sugar mill), with its 10,000 acres of land, for the purpose of a radical experiment—the ousting of the foreign, absentee owners and the making over of the enterprise into a workers' and small planters' cooperative undertaking. The high price paid may be responsible for the failure to take over other mills as well; perhaps the administration also thought it wise to make sure that the Lafayette plan could be carried out successfully before risking more money, but the disappointment that other and smaller concerns were not taken over simultaneously remains. Not unnaturally, changes have been made as the experiment has developed. The idea, in broad outlines, is that an industrial cooperative shall run the mill and a central service cooperative shall purchase and control agricultural machinery and furnish management and buying and selling facilities to the members of the planters' and the workers' cooperatives. Planters' cooperatives are to be organized in each of the tracts of less than 500 acres into which the sugar lands are to be divided. Plainly this means a cumbersome and involved organization, calling for a good deal of knowledge on the part of the workers. Many critics feel that it is too complicated to succeed. In addition, submarginal sugar lands are to be exchanged for good sugar lands, on which the canefield laborers are to be settled, to enable them to do subsistence crop-raising when unemployed, and gradually to purchase their homes and small acreages.

The mere outline of this program shows how extraordinarily difficult and far-reaching it is, involving as it does social, financial, economic, and labor questions in addition to the ordinary business problems of operating a big sugar enterprise. It is further complicated by the *colonos,* or small, independent cane-growers, whose numbers are steadily decreasing (from 58,371 in 1910 to 52,965 in 1930; 65 per cent of the entire crop of 7,710,000 tons produced in 1935 was harvested on the lands of sugar companies). These *colonos* are often victimized by unscrupulous mill-owners who falsify weights or chemical analyses upon which payments are based. Hence the Lafayette experiment, which will grind cane for neighboring *colonos,* is of the utmost importance to the small cane-grower. Now it is obvious that in such a huge undertaking there are bound to be differences of opinion; that mistakes will be made. To form a judgment as to whether the critics of the undertaking are right, time will be necessary. Meanwhile the experiment of operating the mill, which began only with this cutting season, was going well when I visited it. The whole undertaking is dependent for its success upon the world price of sugar and the retention of the present allotment of sugar which Puerto Rico is allowed to send to the mainland for consumption. So far as I could perceive, there is no effort to ignore the fundamental purpose of this great human and economic experiment, which is a revolutionary dividing up of the land of the large owners.

Undoubtedly, Dr. Gruening's chief mistake was that on coming to Puerto Rico he chose for his coworkers the men whom he knew best, in whom he had the most confidence, who sponsored the general program. He failed to take into consideration that they were nearly all of one party. Unfortunately, the Puerto Rican is exceptionally politically minded, and so the public came to believe that Dr. Gruening was creating in the P. R. R. A. a political machine intended to build up the Liberal, that is, the minority, Party, when he had no such intention. Subsequently the disagreements which arose in the P. R. R. A., Dr. Gruening's bitter dismissal of Professor Garcia as head of the Rural Rehabilitation Division, the resignation of Professor Chardon, and the allegations—flatly denied by the P. R. R. A. heads—that radical changes were made without Professor Garcia's knowledge to the injury of the sugar program alienated friends and supporters. It is also felt that Dr. Gruening has changed his attitude toward independence and is now openly hostile to it, after having said it was for the Puerto Ricans to decide. The conservatives cannot forget that Dr. Gruening came to the island with the reputation of being closely allied with the liberal movement, in addition to having been that most terrible of creatures, an editor of *The Nation*. While not denying his mistakes, I maintain that no one could have tackled this particularly difficult problem of Puerto Rican reconstruction without antagonizing some people. Into the details of all the controversies it is perfectly impossible to enter. Meanwhile, Dr. Gruening can greatly relieve the grave tension by making it plain that the desire for independence will not be considered by anyone in authority as synonymous with enmity to the United States and that no one will be punished for espousing it. It is a situation so difficult as to call for superhuman patience.

Finally, I wish that I had space to record the many other accomplishments of the P. R. R. A. and also those of the Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration, the predecessor and coadjutor of the P. R. R. A. I can only add that of the seventy-five workers' reconstruction camps being developed those I visited are full of promise. Selected men are being trained there in sanitation, diet, and other requisites of successful homesteading. The P. R. R. A. hires laborers to work on the reconstruction of plantations and gets from the planters in return three acres of average land at half its appraised value, to be purchased by the laborer on long-time payments. Many cement homes have already been built, completely sanitary, vermin- and rat-proof, and safe against hurricanes —also utterly unattractive, suggesting only mausoleums. Then there is a superb reforestation program, and many other plans. It is all only a beginning; it calls for experimentation, for trial and error, and a readiness to rise above party lines and personal antagonisms so that the general welfare shall benefit. But economic safety may yet be achieved if there is adequate unselfish cooperation on the island, if justice rules in Washington, and not the selfishness of privilege and conscienceless business.

[*The first of Mr. Villard's two articles on Puerto Rico appeared last week. Next week he will resume his regular page, Issues and Men.*]

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Taxi Strike

BY GEROLD FRANK

Toledo, March

I WAS standing outside a hamburger joint on Adams Street where some of the striking cab drivers hung out, talking to a lanky, red-eyed driver. He was sore. "Seven bucks I got from the company yesterday," he said, waving a check in front of me. "I made it two weeks ago when they laid me off three days for going home to lunch."

"Three days?" I asked. "Three days just for going home to lunch?"

"I took the cab," he said. "Y'aint supposed to. Uses up gas, and one of the company men caught me. Well, like I said, I made this seven bucks two weeks ago—they keep a couple of weeks behind so if you run out they don't lose a penny on you—and they took off seven cents for the government and six bucks ninety-three—get it? —for accident insurance. Now, what's that leave me?"

I looked at the check. It was made out to Joe Wilson and after the dollar sign the word "none" had been typed in. "What I wanna know," Joe Wilson went on, "is, d'you think they'd write a story about the check if I took it down to the paper?"

"Don't you get any union benefit?" I asked.

"No," he said. "I ain't got my C. I. O. button yet. We're just joining up."

"Well," I asked, "how much would you make if you worked all week and they didn't lay you off?"

"Figure it out for yourself," he said. "Twelve bucks guaranteed if you take in thirty-six bucks a week. At a quarter a drag, that means twenty-four drags a day, and brother, take it from me, you hustle your head off plenty —if you're lucky." Another driver in a blue sweater, tall and broad-shouldered, came up. "You a driver?" he demanded. "Go on in. Get inside." We both went in.

It was a small, dark, cramped restaurant with a slot machine near the door and the Greek proprietor and his daughter behind the counter. They both had the same cast of face, the same noses, long, drawn to a point, flanges well marked, the same dark eyes. The place was crowded with drivers.

The tall, broad-shouldered driver in the blue sweater vaulted the counter and pulled a chair after him. He jumped up on it. "Now you guys lis'n to me!" he shouted. "I wanna talk. When I get through I'll answer questions, and if anyone else wants to talk, he can go ahead, see?" He paused. "Now, whatawe want?" He answered himself. "We want twen-ty-one bucks a week, see, and nothin' under!"

"You said it, pal!" someone shouted.

Broad-shoulders put up a hand for silence. He was big and rawboned and powerful, and he bore down on you with his gray eyes.

"You guys, each 'n every individually one," he said, "lis'n to me. Yuh can't live on twelve bucks a week. It's no go! Every individually one, no one goes ona streets until we get that contract! Yuh know who's behind yuh? Yuh got the C. I. O.! The C. I. O.!" He shouted it, with a pause after each word. "Them sonovabitches, they gotta—." He stopped short and turned quickly to the girl. She was behind the cash register, leaning languidly on one elbow on the white tile counter. "Excuse me, lady," he said politely, but she did not change a muscle in her face. "Them guys gotta pay yuh a livin' wage! And d'yuh know what'll happen if they don't?"

"Yah, what'll happen?" a man challenged. "Tell us."

Broad-shoulders opened his mouth, stopped, took a long breath. He leaned forward and began gesturing before the words came. "Are there ten thousan' teamsters an' cooks an' bus drivers in Toledo? I'm askin'!"

"No!" someone retorted, and laughed. Broad-shoulders went on as though he had not heard.

"That's what'll happen," he said. "Ten thousan' teamsters an' cooks an' drivers are with yuh. They're C. I. O.! They'll stick with yuh! They're right behind yuh!" He paused and breathed deeply again. "And d'yuh know what yuh gotta do? It's t'come across with that deuce spot, them two dollars dues. Yuh gotta be organized!"

"Where yuh gonna get that deuce spot?" someone demanded.

Broad-shoulders picked him out with a long, pointing forefinger. "O.K.," he said, and pulled at his belt and looked around. "I've been asked a question. O.K. I'll answer it. Now lis'n. Yuh know the C. I. O. said yuh got thirdy days—thirdy days yuh got from the time we win this goddam strike and go back ona street—to raise that deuce spot. Now, if any guy here can't make two measly bucks in thirdy days workin' steady on twenty-one bucks a week"—he paused and drove home his point by swinging his arm violently downward—"then that guy shouldn' be ona street!" He leaned forward suddenly. "You," he said. "Did I answer your question?"

"Yessir," said the questioner promptly. "You answered it. I got my answer."

"O.K.," said Broad-shoulders. "Now I'm askin' yuh, are we all stickin' together? Are we all bringing' in that deuce spot for the C. I. O.?"

They all shouted then, and the girl behind the counter relaxed and smiled, and the Greek grinned too and jokingly thrust out the first and fourth fingers of his right hand in a mock evil-eye sign at one of the drivers, and then they opened the door and surged out. "What I wanna know," said a voice in my ear, and I saw it was the lanky, red-eyed driver, "is, d'you think they'd write a story about it if I took it down?"

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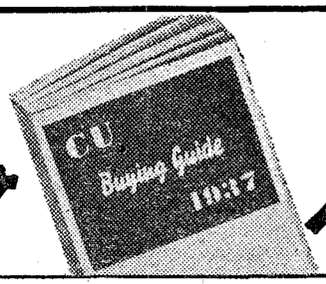
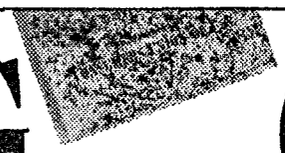
Now  ready!

THE CONSUMERS UNION 1937

BUYING  GUIDE

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BOOKS *and the* ARTS

The Revolutionary Conscience

BREAD AND WINE. By Ignazio Silone. Translated from the Italian by Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher. Harper and Brothers. $2.50.

ALTHOUGH "Fontamara," a story of peasant life in Fascist Italy, was unusual in its integration of a profound humanity with a materialist reading of reality, its scope was hardly wide enough to serve as a complete test of its author's talent. This second novel reveals Silone's full stature; he must now be recognized as one of the most truly contemporary and significant writers of our time. "Bread and Wine" strikes out into newer areas, coming to grips with problems so modern that fiction has scarcely touched them. The fate of the peasant is here intersected by the fate of the intellectual, and besides being an imaginative report of conditions under fascism, the book is also an audit of the revolutionary conscience.

If the intellectual's impetus toward Marxism has its primary source in his moral condemnation of existing society, does he not, then, really cheat himself when in trying to implement his ideals he comes to regard moral values as "petty-bourgeois prejudices" and to subordinate his spiritual and moral needs to the logic of professional politics? Moreover, does not this subordination lead, in the last instance, to utter loss of integrity and the impoverishment of life? Silone places this problem, considered so imprudent and irreverent that so far it has been largely ignored by proletarian writing, in the center of his questionings and perception; and in this sense he has indeed deepened the literature of which he is a part, for one of its tasks is to make the revolution as conscious of itself as it is of the social order it seeks to overthrow. To wrestle with this particular dilemma, however, means to lay oneself open to the perils of mysticism—and, in truth, Silone does not wholly evade these perils; yet the boldness of his effort more than compensates for any errors he may have committed.

In endowing his chief protagonist, Pietro Spina, with a consciousness and sensibility of the highest order, he makes him into a perfect instrument for the dissection of the revolutionary intellectual type. Repelled by the customs and insincerities of party politics (the identity of his party is, by the way, never established), Spina returns from exile to renew himself in underground revolutionary work in a country famished and intimidated, where everything, even hunger, has been bureaucratized. The peasants live in a state of "almost geological resignation," the workers are cowed, and the intellectuals are given a choice between becoming pariahs or state employees. Spina's task is twofold, practical as well as spiritual: while engaging in conspiratorial work he must simultaneously seek to discover the true morality of revolutionary action. Hence the story proceeds on two levels; it is both an ethical dialogue and a plot of active politics. But the two levels are symbolically unified at the very start when Spina, the better to elude the police, puts on the dark robes of a priest and is thus enabled to consecrate the new revolutionary mysteries in the very vestments of the old. He immerses himself in the life of the masses, living among peasants and small-town people and in Rome. In his encounters with the devout girl, Cristina, and with the rebellious priest, Don Benedetto, who sees the fascist dictatorship as Anti-Christ, he is compelled to redefine for himself the meaning of Christianity. Cristina represents the quietism of the church—she is under the spell of its opiate; but in Don Benedetto Spina perceives spiritual forces in which action and morality are reconciled. Personified in the episodes of his illness and the agony and death of his comrades in arms, this theme is developed to the conclusion that the revolutionary life, in our epoch the only genuine spirituality, must vindicate the destiny of man by repudiating "alike the destiny of the sheep and the destiny of the lion." Thus for him ethical passion becomes the motor-force of social change.

It seems to me that in his search for a lyric and heroic humanism Silone has not escaped idealist abstractions. His solution remains on the individual plane, since he indicates no method through which it could be effected within a mass movement or a political party. And from a Marxist standpoint, his sway toward the transcendental might perhaps be explained by the continued defeat of the revolutionary forces in Italy, just as the defeat of the 1905 revolution in Russia explains the "god-building" of Gorky and Lunacharsky in that period.

But even the weaknesses of this novel are organic to its material and to the reality which it encompasses. In posing the problems that it does it fertilizes literature with a new awareness, and the coming victory over fascism is foreshadowed in the strength of its cultural affirmation.

PHILIP RAHV

"Either—or"

EDUCATION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE LIBERAL EDUCATOR'S PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION. By Zalmen Slesinger. Covici-Friede. $3.

MR. SLESINGER'S book is an examination from a strict, somewhat ultra-orthodox, Marxian point of view of the ideas of a group of educators regarding the relation of education to social change. In many points, this group and Mr. Slesinger are in agreement as to the changes which need to be made in society, especially in its political and economic institutions. Both would move in the direction of greater organized social control and economic collectivism. The difference between them has to do with the methods by which radical social changes are to be effected. The group of educators that is criticized emphasizes the desirability of democratic processes, within which it includes public education as an important factor. Mr. Slesinger emphasizes at every point the class structure of society, the class struggle, and the transfer of power by a revolution brought about by force.

Mr. Slesinger's account is objective and refreshingly free from personalities. In his earlier chapters he gives a fair summary of the "liberal educators'" criticism of existing social institutions and their proposals for a new social order. He then places in contrast with their position that of contempo-

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rary Marxian Communists, with its emphasis upon class conflict as the sole dependable dynamic for effecting any social change that is significant. In three chapters on the class structure of American society he assembles many facts that are worthy of attention whether or not one gives them the exclusive economic and class interpretation the author adopts. As a minor point, I would remark that I think Mr. Slesinger fails to give sufficient weight to the fact that the men in question, writing as educators, are addressing themselves to educators, endeavoring to awaken teachers to the seriousness of the present social situation and the responsibilities of the school that result from that situation. Accordingly, he tends to take their program for educators as if it covered their whole conception of methods of bringing about radical social change. It does not follow that liberal educators are unaware of the importance of organization in bringing about change because, in addressing themselves to teachers, they stress the factors most directly connected with the work of teachers.

The important point, however, is the contrast set up between democratic processes and those of class conflict. Mr. Slesinger's book is noteworthy for the rigidity and completeness with which he presents an absolute "either-or" position. He leaves no option save that between individuals as individuals and economic classes set over against one another in total opposition. There is no place left for social interplay and modification of one group by another. Some curious inconsistencies result. After holding that the educational group greatly exaggerates the potential power of education, he remarks, "The intellectuals play a most strategic role in modern social life. They hold the keys for the functioning of our complicated world." I imagine most of the group he criticizes would regard this as a rather romantic view of the power of educators. Again, after holding that our whole society is class-structured economically, that its culture is class-structured, and that government is exclusively a tool of the dominant capitalistic class, he says, "The tragedy of the working class is internal strife and division. Lack of solidarity and unity is its present greatest weakness." He then goes on to give facts indicating that in the strict Marxian sense, in which class consciousness is an integral part of the class concept, American society is not in fact "class-structured" though it ought to be.

The book, aside from the assemblage of facts that should be considered seriously by every liberal, is chiefly noteworthy, it seems to me, for its presentation of the "nothing but, either-or" philosophy of society. Read in that light it may lead those who are not already committed to some form of social absolutism to reconsider the possibility of dependence upon democratic processes in bringing about fundamental social changes.

JOHN DEWEY

Letters in Vindication

THE LETTERS OF FANNY BRAWNE TO FANNY KEATS, 1820-1824. Oxford University Press. $3.

THE day Keats sailed for Italy, where he died, Fanny Brawne, eager to comply with his request, began her correspondence with his younger sister—the sister so like Tom. But because Keats had requested Fanny to keep their love secret, a century passed before justice was done and these letters published. They had traveled meantime among Fanny Keats's dearest possessions. They rest now at last in the Keats Memorial House, Hampstead.

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old girl, made wise through grief, attempting to comfort and to train the girl of seventeen who might have been her sister-in-law. Fanny Keats was still the ward of the Abbeys. It was very difficult, therefore, for Fanny Brawne to keep in contact with her, yet she managed to do so until Keats's sister came of age and married Valentine Llanos, whom Fanny Brawne had known.

Fanny Brawne's letters prove that she was engaged to Keats, that she regretted not having married him before he left, that Keats knew and she guessed that he would not return. They place the date of Keats's engagement to Fanny. They prove that information concerning his serious state of health was kept from Fanny, and that she guessed the worst. She knew, moreover, that he did not read her last letters to him. These, in other words, are the letters to which Amy Lowell had reference in writing her biography of Keats; they are the documents which caused her to champion Fanny Brawne.

Aside from their informational value, they are homely, delightfully human letters. They may seem unliterary and conventional beside Keats's own passionate love letters, but they portray a woman real and understandable. Fanny Brawne seems, indeed, to be rather more intelligent than the average middle-class girl of her generation. She echoes Keats's opinions on poets and poetry. She reads and advises reading for Keats's sister. She was, in general, of course, a creature of her own environment, but she kept her silence even under attacks upon her character and she did not marry until twelve years after Keats's death. She was in love, and loyal.

EDA LOU WALTON

Two Generations

A LONG WAY FROM HOME. By Claude McKay. Lee Furman. $3.

LET ME LIVE. By Angelo Herndon. Random House. $2.50.

THE most significant page in Claude McKay's autobiography is the one on which he recalls the evening in 1922 when he and William Gropper saw the Theater Guild production of Andreyev's "He Who Gets Slapped." McKay was then an editor of the *Liberator* and for this occasion had taken Charles Wood's place as its dramatic critic. He had many years of celebrity behind him, which had begun when he won a government trade scholarship in Jamaica, where he was born and where he published his first book of poems in 1911. The *Seven Arts* had published two of his poems in 1917, and a year later Frank Harris had "discovered" him for *Pearson's*, that ill-fated American venture that marked the spectacular decline of Harris's career. Success in *Pearson's* made the transition from waiter in a Pullman dining-car to the life of a professional writer barely possible. With Harris's encouragement he found new friends and in 1919 went to London, where he interviewed Bernard Shaw, read Marx, and joined Sylvia Pankhurst's staff on the *Workers' Dreadnaught.* On his return to New York he accepted Max Eastman's invitation to help him edit the *Liberator.* His visit to "He Who Gets Slapped" was the source of the finest document of its kind in English, and nothing that Claude McKay has written before or since equals the quality of its emotion, its force, and its brilliance.

Claude McKay had walked into the orchestra of the theater to see the play, but he never reached his seat; he and Gropper were instructed to sit in the balcony, and from that vantage point, he was to write: "I had come . . . as a dramatic critic. . . . The important fact with which I was suddenly

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slapped in the face was my color. I am a Negro—*he, the One Who Gets Slapped.*" The review was the actual poem Claude McKay had hoped to write; he was no longer impeded by the smooth falsetto of the lesser romantics whom Harris and Max Eastman admired and whom Gerard Manley Hopkins so happily defined in a letter to Canon Dixon. For the moment Oscar Wilde and James Thomson of "The City of Dreadful Night" relaxed their influence upon his imagery and verbal imagination, and in that moment he became the very spirit of the highly sensitized and civilized man he was, a man who happened to be a Negro and a member of an exploited class and people.

Interesting as the remainder of Claude McKay's autobiography proves itself to be, its mere charm and pathos overwhelm the narrative. He is obviously "tender-minded," intelligent, sincere; and as he describes his escape to the Soviet Union—away from a wife who suddenly appeared in New York—his adventures in France, Germany, Spain, northern Africa, and back to America, one knows only too well that his disillusion and bewilderment today are neither unconscious nor wilful evasions of responsibility. Problems of sex, race, history, art, and the "group soul" are interwoven in his mind. The last pages of his book are filled with unanswerable questions; his clearest hope is for a Negro leader, and in that hope he seems to occupy the same nether world that Hart Crane describes in "Black Tambourine." "I have nothing to give but my singing," he says at last. "I have been a troubadour wanderer"—and though the words are quite as false as the color which ran from Frank Harris's hair and stained his forehead, the nostalgia behind the words remains sincere.

There is a kind of father-and-son relationship between Claude McKay's book and Angelo Herndon's "Let Me Live." Claude McKay's symbols for revolt—like those of many another writer of his generation—included bohemianism and the search for Beauty with a capital B; the soft, vague, shadowy word and phrase were sought and with them the desire for freedom from the laws of society. He had witnessed the events which transformed Fabian socialism into communism, but he saw them with the same attitude toward radical politics that marked Isadora Duncan's revolutionary enthusiasms. Angelo Herndon, born in a small Ohio steel and coal mining town in 1913, represents clearly enough another time, a different childhood, and a new interpretation of radical activity,

Herndon is neither poet nor skilful publicist; the opening chapters of his book are awkwardly written and the characterizations of himself, his friends, enemies, and casual associates are wooden and unreal. The reality of the book lies in the logic of Herndon's relation to society, in which he, a Negro proletarian and Communist organizer, defied the employer classes of the South. There can be no doubt that he has a better brain and a keener sense of a dramatic situation than the men who repeatedly threaten him with torture and death, and it is also clear that he is fighting not for himself alone but for the right of unorganized labor in the South to form its unions. His speech to the grand jurors of Fulton County, Georgia, is a masterpiece of close reasoning and forceful polemics. It is characteristic of him to speak of himself in the third person, to say, "no matter what you do with Angelo Herndon, no matter what you do with the Angelo Herndons in the future, this question of unemployment, the question of unity between Negro and white workers cannot be solved with hands that are stained with the blood of an innocent individual." The publication of "Let Me Live" is

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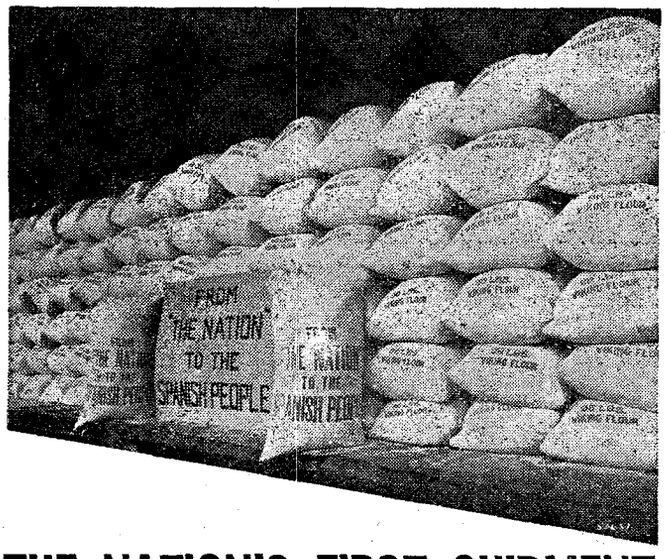

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merely one incident in his career as he awaits the decision of the Supreme Court on the validity of the Georgia Civil War statute to prevent slave insurrection, a statute that was revived so as to condemn Herndon to twenty years on the chain gang and certain death. It may be said that Herndon has converted the spirit of Claude McKay's review of "He Who Gets Slapped" into action; and he has concluded the present phase of his activity with a courageous statement: "Death itself is not the greatest tragedy that can possibly happen to a man; rather, the greatest tragedy is to live placidly and safely and to keep silent in the face of injustice and oppression."

HORACE GREGORY

Shorter Notices

THE BOYS IN THE BACK ROOM (LES COPAINS). By Jules Romains. Translated by Jacques Le Clercq. Robert M. McBride and Company. $2.

Everything that Romains has done, from his earliest verse to his current attempt to break all fiction-length records in "Men of Good Will," is more or less connected with his mystical doctrine of unanimism; and the present work, originally published in 1913, is no exception. A mixture of anti-bourgeois satire and pure fantasy, it is suffused with a rhetorical celebration of the "absolute" character of perfect comradeship. It is an odd condensation into hilarious Latin farce of the diffuse Whitmanism that dominated the unanimist group before the war. The cronies of the title carry on an organized campaign of unmotivated subversiveness against the established order. Disguised as important dignitaries from Paris, they cause havoc in the provinces by decorating each other with the Legion of Honor, posing naked on top of public statues, and mounting pulpits to deliver Rabelaisian sermons on the neglected bounties of the flesh. Much of this manages to be amusing despite the obvious intellectual strain; and the long sermon at the end is a tour de force that confirms the suspicion that Romains is the kind of writer who can do almost anything after a fashion. But the book comes out of a mood—a pre-war and perhaps distinctively Gallic mood—that for very many readers will be difficult to comprehend today. It is essentially the mood out of which came Gide's "Caves du Vatican" and other efforts to exploit the fictive possibilities of complete moral and social irresponsibility. This fantasy has a too cerebral creak, this humor a too sadistic ring, for a generation that is unconsoled by any striking evidences of a fundamental unanimity among mankind. Except for the inept title and other jarring Americanisms, Mr. Le Clercq has done well with the translation.

WILLIAM TROY

LAWYER LINCOLN. By Albert A. Woldman. Houghton Mifflin Company. $3.50.

Lincoln was confronted with constitutional problems of the gravest nature, yet historians are commonly agreed that he met those problems in worthy fashion. Even the late Mr. Taft declared that no man ever lived who would have made an abler Chief Justice. Since the bar was Lincoln's Alma Mater, where he learned to deal with human nature, to cope with Douglas, to criticize the Dred Scott decision, and to construe the Constitution, it seems strange that no complete account of Lincoln as a lawyer has yet been written. For despite the publishers' claim, Mr. Woldman's book is not "complete." Just how far was Lincoln's reasoning on the Dred Scott case original? What that was new, if anything,

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did he add to the legal argument against secession? And when he found, or claimed to find, those constitutional powers that made him almost a dictator, did he really see them first? Mr. Woldman does not tell us. Yet his book discusses practically every phase of Lincoln's life as a lawyer, places it against the background of his environment, throws some new light on his practice, and is for the most part well done. Honest Abe, as Mr. Woldman shows, was no Don Quixote of the bar but a shrewd and practical lawyer. Weak in technical knowledge, he was especially gifted in original reasoning and also in persuading a jury. While a poor lawyer in a bad case, he was not squeamish about taking cases. He enjoyed a wide practice and liked his fees fairly well. As Mr. Woldman shows, it was Lincoln's twenty-three years at the bar that molded and qualified him to save the Union. "To Lincoln, the self-trained lawyer," says he, "history must assign a place on a level with Washington, Hamilton, Marshall, and Webster as an outstanding figure in the creation, interpreting, and expounding of the Constitution."

CHARLES LEE SNYDER

THE UNEXPECTED YEARS. By Laurence Housman. The Bobbs-Merrill Company. $3.

Mr. Housman gives no clue as to what nebulous or clear-cut forms he expected his life to take; and his matter-of-fact account of what did happen to him needs badly the contrapuntal tally of what did not. "The Unexpected Years" is a record of small literary successes, of picayune quarrels with the censor, of encounters with his more famous brother, of battles fought for woman suffrage and for peace, of telepathic experiences and semi-supernatural visitations. Presented in extension, the autobiography yet has a tendency to telescope, to collapse back on to itself; and the reader is left with the embarrassing realization that this life of seventy-odd years has been no life at all. Thus the book achieves an unintentional pathos, the pathos of a gently assertive, mediocre mind which finds the clutter of its experience more fascinating than seems warrantable to others.

MARY MCCARTHY

LAWRENCE: THE LAST CRUSADE. By Selden Rodman. The Viking Press. $2.50.

Mr. Rodman's narrative verse is strong, dramatic, and technically sound, but it is scarcely the proper setting for so complex and poetic a figure as the leader of the Arabian revolt and the author of "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom." Mr. Rodman is a conscientious craftsman, and he has skilfully avoided the vagueness and pomposity of average blank verse. But while there are many passages in his book which sound like poetry, there are none which succeed in producing a genuine poetic effect. Mr. Rodman's approach to the character of Lawrence is also unpoetic: Lawrence emerges as a collection of data gathered here and there from his own writings and those of various biographers—and where Mr. Rodman has used his imagination, the result is not as illuminating as it might be. It is Lawrence reduced to his simplest terms: the man of action plus the extraordinary egoist, guided in all matters by a highly personal and all but incommunicable scale of values. Mr. Rodman manages to present these twin aspects of his hero's personality with clarity and force. But nowhere does he succeed in bringing Lawrence back to life or in arriving at a profound understanding of the complexities in his nature. His book seems an attempt to define Lawrence rather than to recreate him.

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FILMS

Japanese Triangle

THE first five minutes of "Kimiko" (Filmarte) are startling. The streets of Tokyo look like the streets of Detroit, and the people going up and down them look exactly like the people we see every day except that they are a trifle shorter. Even the first interior is familiar—a very "modern" sort of office which a girl in a gray suit is preparing to leave at the end of her day's work so that she may meet a young man, also in a gray suit, downstairs at the corner. The two of them step briskly along, quarreling and making up as if they were natives of Hollywood, then quarreling again and refusing to walk together. It is only after Kimiko, the girl, arrives at the apartment where she lives with her mother, Etsuko, that the picture begins to be Japanese in the way we had expected it to be when we heard it announced as the first talkie ever to be imported into this country from the land of the kimono. Etsuko writes poems, and Japanese poems. She spends all her time at it, seated gently beside a table whence the melancholy phrases drift from her while Kimiko puts on an apron and gets dinner.

The poems are the first sign to us, outside of the language and the faces, that we are on foreign soil. But the conviction a little later on that the film contains a new experience for us comes from something more important than any such accident of detail. It comes from the whole management of the story. Not from the story itself, which is about a man, his wife, and his mistress. It is the management, the emphasis, that makes the difference; and I can suggest this difference best by saying that each element of the narrative is presented with a simplicity and a seriousness, and a certainty of effect, which reminds us of something too frequently forgotten in the movies, namely, that economy is power. Mikio Naruse, the director, needs no crowds of people, no cascades of scenery, no whirlpools of significant objects in order to convince us that his story is important. He evidently believes it is; and is content, whether in Tokyo or in the remote province where Kimiko goes to find her father, to tell it with the fewest possible strokes. The result is one of the most moving films I know, and one for which there can be no better words than that it should be seen.

"History Is Made at Night" (United Artists) cannot be accused of economy. It is one of those film romances which call for a great deal of last-minute sailing between Europe and New York and for much loud comedy as an offset to the lavish tenderness of the lovers; and in this particular case there must be a collision at the end between a liner and an iceberg. But granting all that, there must be economy somewhere among the riches; for the film is easily the best of its kind in recent years, and indeed by any standard it is a good film. Jean Arthur and Charles Boyer as the lovers whom nothing can ever quite succeed in keeping apart, and who when they are together speak a preposterous little language of their own, are charming not so much because they act with restraint as because they know how to act as if nothing restrained them, though of course something does—the art, shall we say, of acting. "History Is Made at Night," in other words, is a romantic comedy that can be believed.

MARK VAN DOREN

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Letters to the Editors

Can War "Save" Democracy?

Dear Sirs: Vera M. Dean's Challenge to Pacifists, in *The Nation* of February 6, is obscure in thought and language, but it is apparently based on the assumption that war can "save" democracy.

Beating the drum for another splendid crusade for peace and freedom, she hurls at patriots an incredible "challenge." What sort of fool from Keokuk or Painted Post would risk his neck to keep Nazi Germany from "absorbing Austria" or "detaching the Sudeten region from Czecho-Slovakia"?

Her logic is singularly defective. Criticizing pacifists who would rely on generous treatment to "wean dictators from the use of force," she asserts: "They apparently assume that peoples living under dictatorial rule not only share their desire for peace but are free to advocate a pacific policy." But dictators are free to adopt pacific policies, and the argument concerns the "weaning" of dictators, not peoples.

The argument on the character of the dictatorship is hopelessly confused. Are the dictators bent on war or merely bluffing? Mrs. Dean glides gracefully and unconsciously from the affirmation of the first alternative to an equally emphatic affirmation of the second. Her position on armaments is thoroughly inconsistent. "The danger of war is always present," we hear, "in a world armed to the teeth." How does she propose to lessen this danger? By adding guns!

Mrs. Dean considers herself a "realistic" pacifist. If she believes that the League jargon of "aggressors" and "sanctions" indicates a "realistic" road to peace for this country, she knows a great deal less of America than of Europe.

NORBORNE HARRIS CROWELL

Potsdam, N. Y., March 10

By-Products of Isolation

Dear Sirs: Louis Fischer's excellent article on Keeping America Out of War in *The Nation* of March 27 is a complete answer to the isolationist doctrine that has infected liberals in Canada and the United States. The idea that there can be security in a purely North American policy has merely tended to raise the prestige of the international anarchy now prevailing throughout the world.

The League of Nations failed because it was unable to invest an unhappy Europe with a vital sense of security. The inability to muster the necessary two-thirds' vote in the American Senate —by just a narrow margin—robbed the dawning internationalist diplomacy of one of its chief pillars. The League was denied that great voice which could have tilted the balance to an enlightened revisionist growth. The world has not recovered from that blow. Mr. Fischer has ably pointed out that the rising fascist star is a by-product of democratic disinterestedness.

MARVIN B. GELBER

Toronto, Canada, March 28

Does Collective Action Mean War?

Dear Sirs: In view of the failure of collective action by democratic powers to uphold the Covenant of the League of Nations in Manchuria, Ethiopia, and Spain, is not *The Nation* a bit too optimistic about the future of collective action, even with the United States included?

Optimism reveals shallowness sometimes, at other times dishonesty. And is *The Nation* dealing straight with its readers when it assures them that collective action, though it may lead to war for other partners to agreement, will not drag the United States into the combat?

F. D. SLOCUM

New York, March 19

Irishmen in Spain

Dear Sirs: I read in a recent number of *The Nation* a short write-up of General O'Duffy's Irish Brigade of some 500 men gone to swell the rebel invader's army in Spain. I have read since in the Boston *Post* and also in Irish papers to hand that another force under the command of Commandant Ryan of the Irish republican army is also in Spain, but the latter body is fighting on the opposite side, with the present Spanish government armies, which fight for liberty and human progress!

Why not give the latter body of Irishmen a little publicity?

AN IRISH REPUBLICAN

Boston, March 7

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